Duiliu Zamfirescu

DUILIU ZAMFIRESCU

By Sanda Stolojan

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About the Author

Sanda Stolojan is Duiliu Zamfirescu's granddaughter. Her father Alexandru Duiliu Zamfirescu was a Romanian diplomat and novelist. She studied modern philology at the university of Bucharest specialising in Romanian and French literature. Before emigrating to France she worked as a literary translator in Bucharest. Now she has settled in Paris, where she writes and publishes verse and literary criticism. Her activity in French is mainly devoted to East European literature. She contributes essays and book reviews to "Le Monde", "Esprit", "Revue des Études Roumaines" and "Journal de Genève" She is on the editing board of "Cahiers de l'Est", a literary quarterly publishing East European authors. She also writes for "Limite" and "Ethos" both published in Romanian in Paris.

Preface

If language is the stone of which a writer's work is built, then Duiliu Zamfirescu has raised for himself a durable, imperishable monument. The facts prove it. From his death in 1922, when his name had hardly begun to circulate among the mass of readers, the reputation which he deserved as unsurpassed in the handling of Romanian has grown and become consolidated. Like other writers of the past, Zamfirescu was not mentioned in the 1950s, after the installation of the Communist regime in Romania. After that, he was reconsidered. Today he has passed into the ranks of the classics, and hardly a month goes by which does not bring an article, an essay, a critical work about him. In particular, there is no work about the Romanian literary language in which his name is not cited. On the occasion of the centenary of the 1877 war of independence, his novels *Viaţa la ţară* and *In război* served as subject for a patriotic film.

This is the more paradoxical as *Viaţa la ţară*, his chief book, is the epic of a world whose values are today disputed in Romania in the name of Marxist ideology; it is the patriarchal world in which country gentry and peasants lived side by side. Yet *Viaţa la ţară* is printed yearly in thousands of copies. It is perhaps the most widely read of classic Romanian novels and is undoubtedly one of the most beautifully written novels in Romanian literature.

Zamfirescu's work comprises a relatively small number of volumes—five or six of some 500 pages each. But they include pages which are essential for the understanding, on the one hand, of the Romanian spirit contained in the language, and on the other, of the evolution of Romanian literature. Zamfirescu wrote one of the first real novels in Romanian, and in any case the first of such quality, when *Viaţa la ţară* appeared in 1894. As poet, short-story writer, and essayist he published in all genres, but his decisive contribution remains in the domain of epic prose, in which he developed his gift of rich and lively language.

By his life, as diplomat and writer in "la belle époque," by his enthusiastic nationalist and patriotic idealism, by his way of being an aesthete in bearing and manners, Zamfirescu belongs to a bygone

world. But *Viaţa la ţară*, with its human types from old Romania, lives on by the art of its language and the sincerity of its inspiration. It is therefore natural that it should occupy a large part of this study of its author.

SANDA STOLOJAN

Paris

Chronology

1858 October 30. Duiliu Zamfirescu is born at Plăineşti in the former county of Rîmnicul–Sărat, in the same year as Barbu Delavrancea and Alexandru Vlahuţă.

1865–1873 Elementary and middle school in the town of Focşani.

1873–1876 Studies at the Matei Basarab lycée in Bucharest.

1877 While a student in the Faculty of Law at Bucharest, he makes his debut in the review *Ghimpele* (The Thorn) with a cycle of romantic poems.

1877–1878 The War of Independence leaves him with profound memories which he later uses in the novel *In Război* (In Wartime) and in several short stories.

1880 Received into the circle of Macedonski's *Literatorul* (The Man of Letters), making his début there with the romantic poem *Levante şi Calavryta*. He finishes the Faculty of Law and is appointed deputy magistrate at Hîrşova in Dobrudja. Unhappy love affair with Eliza. He begins to contribute to *România liberă* (Free Romania), for which he works till 1884. From this time date his letters to Duiliu Ioanin.

1881 Appointed procurator at Tîrgovişte, a post which he soon resigns.

1882 Settles at Bucharest as editor to *România liberă*.

1883 Publishes his first volume of poems and short stories, *Fără titlu* (No Title).

1884 Frequents the circle of Junimea and begins to contribute to *Convorbiri literare* (Literary Conversations). Reads to Maiorescu his short story *Noapte bună* (Good Night).

1885 Presents himself and is admitted to the competition for diplomatic attaché at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; enters the Ministry as an official. Gives lessons in French and Romanian at the Sf. Gheorghe lycée.

1888 Is appointed secretary at the Legation in Rome, for which he

leaves in May. Remains at Rome till 1906, with the exception of an interlude at Brussels and Athens between 1892 and 1894.

1890 March 10. Marries Henriette Allievi.

1894 Volume of poems *Alte orizonturi* (Other Horizons).

1894–1895 The novel *Viaţa la ţară* (Life in the Country) appears in *Convorbiri literare*.

1895 Volume of short stories, *Novele romane* (Roman Stories).

1895–1896 The novel *Tănase Scatiu* appears in *Convorbiri literare*.

1897 Volume of verses, *Imnuri Păgîne* (Pagan Hymns).

1897–1898 The novel *În război* appears in *Convorbiri literare*.

1898 Elected Corresponding Member of the Romanian Academy.

1899 Volume of poems, *Poezii nouă* (New Poems).

1901–1902 Travels in Transylvania and visits Sibiu and Arad, gathering material for his novel *Îndreptări* (Guide-lines). The novel appears in *Literatură şi Artă Română* (Romanian Literature and Art), a magazine edited by Nicolae Petraşcu.

1906 Returns to Romania, where he is appointed Secretary General in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The novel *Anna* appears in *Convorbiri Literare*.

1908 Elected Member of the Romanian Academy.

1909 Reads to the Romanian Academy his lecture on *Poporanismul în literatură*, which provokes one of the most heated literary polemics of the age. Appointed Romanian representative on the European Danubian Commission.

1911 Volume of short stories, *Furfanţo*, and the novel *Lydda*.

1916–1917 Romania enters the war alongside the forces of the Entente. As a result of the military disaster of autumn 1916, Zamfirescu takes refuge in Odessa and later in Jassy.

1918 At Jassy he brings out *Îndreptarea* (The Guide-line), organ of the People's party movement led by General Averescu.

1918–1920 Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the Romanian Parliament.

1919 Volume of poems, *Pe Marea Neagră* (On the Black Sea).

1920 Volume of tales and reminiscences of his diplomatic career, *O muză* (A Muse).

1922 June 30. Zamfirescu dies at Agapia and is buried in Focşani.

CHAPTER 1

Life

THE years which were the lifetime of Duiliu Zamfirescu's generation were decisive ones for modern Romania. When he was born in 1858, the future Romania still consisted of two principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia. Officially they were bound to Turkey by relations of vassalage, although in reality the Turkish presence had been weakening since the beginning of the century, counterbalanced more and more persistently by the Russian presence. On their political course to independence the Romanians were steering their way between the "suzerain power" Turkey and the "protecting power" Russia.

In 1859, a year after the birth of Duiliu Zamfirescu, there took place the first major event in this journey: the union of the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia under a single ruler, Prince Al.I. Cuza. When Zamfirescu was nineteen years old, in 1877, he witnessed the great War of Independence. The Romanian Principalities, which had been ruled since 1866 by Prince Carol I of Hohenzollern, took part alongside Russia in the war against the Turks. The campaign developed in the present-day Bulgaria. The Romanian armies won victories which have remained part of the national legend: the siege of Grivitza, the battles of Plevna, of Rahova, etc.

The war and the victories had a great impact. "The United Principalities" became independent of Turkey, to which they had been tied as vassals for 400 years. To the War of Independence Zamfirescu was to devote his novel *În război* (In Wartime), one of his works which he valued most.

The war of 1877 gave birth to the Kingdom of Romania (known later as the Old Kingdom). The next action was that of "national integration." Zamfirescu was between fifty and sixty when the First World War took place. He witnessed the entry of Romania in 1916 on the side of the Allied Powers, France, Britain, and America. He lived through the heroic battles of Mărăşeşti and Mărăşti, which were fought against the Germans in 1917. The treaties of Versailles and

Trianon (1919) integrated the territory of Romania by the addition of Transylvania, Bucovina, and Bessarabia, creating the "Greater Romania." The annexation of Transylvania, long desired by Romanians on both sides of the Carpathians, was experienced by contemporaries as the fulfillment of "a national ideal." The mentality of Zamfirescu's generation could not but be influenced by the events which it witnessed, namely the rapid stages of the political creation of modern Romania: Union, Independence, and Integration.

Zamfirescu is a writer closely linked to the Romanian context. His works fulfills a social and national role. The aim which he pursued was to "turn the love of the Romanians towards their land in the Danube Valley." [1] It was from the political and social preoccupations of his time that Zamfirescu drew the material for his fiction. The Romania of a certain moment in historical and social development remains fixed in the novelist's writings.

The political importance of the fifty years which correspond roughly to the three generations who made Romania, is reflected also in Romanian literature. Its foundations were laid then, and generally speaking the generations of the "classics" cover these decades. The emergence of political Romania (prepared, of course, since the beginnings of the nineteenth century) was accompanied by the phenomenon of the appearance of the great writers of the second half of the nineteenth century: Alecsandri, Creangă, Eminescu. Zamfirescu was a contemporary and colleague of Caragiale, Delavrancea, Vlahuţă, and Coşbuc. His place is alongside the "classics," that is, the founders of Romanian literature, especially of the modern Romanian novel.

Both the family and the district into which Zamfirescu was born are characteristic of the social and cultural milieu from which a large part of the Romanian intellectuals of this time were drawn. A provincial family of the middle class—one might say, if the expression were not rather strained, "of the provincial bourgeoisie," since it is a question of a middle class still anchored in the patriarchal traditions peculiar to Romania of that time. A family from the town of Focşani, at the border of Moldavia and Wallachia, with connections in local administration and commerce, and one which—it is worth noticing—counted among its members in the middle of the nineteenth century several scholars who had studied abroad.

When Zamfirescu was born in 1858, Focşani was a town typical of the Romanian provinces of the day. The Romanian Principalities were lands without towns properly so-called, except for Bucharest and Jassy. People lived rather "in the country." A town like Focşani had low houses surrounded by gardens and unmade lanes on which the traffic consisted of horse carriages and ox carts. In 1875 Zamfirescu's uncle, the architect Ion Mincu, was studying how to bring water to Focşani. When Zamfirescu left his native town in 1873 to finish his studies at Bucharest, he was driven in a carriage as far as Buzău, where the railway line ended. In 1859, the year of the Union of the Principalities, Focşani had a part to play because of its geographical situation at the boundary of the two Principalities. The commission for carrying out the Union, known as "The Focşani Central Commission," was at work here till 1862. These were three glorious years for Focşani, after which the commission was abolished and the center of affairs moved to the capital of the United Principalities, Bucharest. The inhabitants of Focşani long mourned the abolition of the commission. As a sort of compensation for its loss, Focşani became a very active cultural center in the succeeding years. An interesting proof is that between 1865 and 1888 it was the town with the most newspapers in the Romania of those days—thirty newspapers for 20,000 inhabitants! After 1873, with the building of the Court of Appeal, Focşani also became a center for magistrates and lawyers.

Duiliu Zamfirescu was born on 30 October 1858, the eldest child of Lascar Zamfirescu, an official at the town hall of Focşani, and of Sultana Mincu. After him came another two boys and four girls. As the family grew, it installed itself in a roomy house with a garden in the center of the town, near Piaţa Unirii. Lascar Zamfirescu was in the course of making the classic career of a rising official. In 1870 he was the mayor's assistant, in 1884 vice-president of the County Council, and in 1886 its president. At the start of his career Lascar was often in demand as an expert in accountancy for the estates in the counties of Putna and Rîmnicul-Sarat. It was during one of these trips that his first son Duiliu was born in the commune of Cucu-Plăineşti. Sultana Mincu was the daughter of a Focşani merchant, Pavel Mincu, and his beautiful Serbian wife. Sultana had six brothers and sisters, all with gifts for art and music. One of them, mentioned above, Ion Mincu, created the Romanian school of architecture.

Here it is worthwhile saying a word about Duiliu Zamfirescu's paternal grandfather. His father, Lascar, was the son of Ion Zamfir, a native of the mountains of Vrancea, and of Zoe Lascaris, who came of a family of Greek origin established in Focşani. Zoe's brother, Iordache Lascaris, had been secretary to Ioniţă-Sandu Sturdza, Prince of Moldavia. Concerning this family of Lascaris, Greeks from Focşani, Rumanized under the name of Lascar, family tradition claimed that they came from the ancient Byzantine clan of the Lascar-

ids. The tradition is worth noting because it caused a stir later at the height of certain polemics, when Duiliu Zamfirescu, having become famous as a writer and a diplomat, recalled the Byzantine claims of his paternal grandmother's family and was accused of snobbery. On the other hand, it was said, for example, that the fine features, bearing, and natural elegance of the writer's father and of Duiliu Zamfirescu himself were a heritage from the Byzantine family. But the physical type of Duiliu might just as well be attributed to the mountaineers of Vrancea, who were well known for the nobility of their physique. Mihai Comăneşteanu, one of the heroes of the Comăneşteanu cycle of novels, was proud of his Vrancean origin!

In 1865 Duiliu Zamfirescu entered Primary School No. 1 at Focşani. It was a few months before the abdication of Cuza and the accession of Carol of Hohenzollern to the throne of the United Principalities. Four years later, in 1869, he went on to the local secondary school, the "Al.I. Cuza." His life as a child and adolescent was spent between Focşani and country estates in the counties of Rîmnicul Sărat and Brăila, where his relatives held lands or rented them. Lascar Zamfirescu owned a vineyard near Odobeşti, where Duiliu and his brothers and sisters spent their holidays. He also used to go to the country place of his mother's cousin, Elena Simionescu-Rîmniceanu, an educated woman, a "noble soul," as they used to say in those days. It is thought that this cousin was his model for Tincuţa in *Viaţa la ţară* (Life in the Country), while her husband, the land-owner and *arendaş*, [2] Ion Simionescu-Rîmniceanu, served as model for the character Tănase Scatiu.

It was a patriarchal life with long holidays, in which he tramped through woods and glades with his shotgun on his shoulder; he was left with "a great love of quiet and solitude". It was then that the images of the Romanian plains and of the hills in the district of Vrancea were for ever printed in his mind. Much later in life; when he returned to his country after almost twenty years of absence abroad, he settled at Faraoane, a few kilometers from Odobeşti, where he bought a vineyard with a house, right in the midst of his boyhood landscape.

At the secondary school at Focşani Duiliu was not a precocious child. Probably the verses which he wrote later are accurate:

> I remember as though it were now
> The time when I ran about bare-headed
> In the dust of the road

> And when I burned my books to ashes
> And played truant from school. . . .[3]

At the age of fourteen Duiliu was getting good marks in history and in French, which he knew well enough to read French authors in the original.

In 1873 he left for Bucharest. Here he was enrolled at the Matei Basarab High School, which was then accommodated in the cells of the monastery of the Holy Apostles on the banks of the Dîmboviţa. The Bucharest into which he stepped out was the old capital of Wallachia and had now become the capital of the United Principalities. The city still bore the marks of the long Turco-Greek period from which it had recently emerged. It was still largely the old Bucharest described by Nicolae Filimon in his novel *Ciocoii vechi şi noi* (Upstarts Old and New); with houses hidden away in gardens, from which Bucharest even today draws its "green" look; with rounded church cupolas on the skyline (the city had an immense number of churches in proportion to its size), which foreign travelers used to feature in their descriptions; with inns and marketplaces recently modernized yet still very Oriental. Zamfirescu was in time to see the city when its center was still around the former *Curtea Veche* (Old Palace), on the banks of the Dîmboviţa, which is today the quarter around Piaţa Unirii. In those days the Dîmboviţa was not yet canalized. In spring when the waters of the river rose, the cells of the monastery of the Holy Apostles were regularly flooded.

Duiliu passed his baccalaureate in the summer of 1876. That autumn he enrolled as a student in the Faculty of Law at Bucharest, being convinced at that time that "all those who have gone far began as mere lawyers and rose from there." [4] He also enrolled, as a student without examination, in the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy. His law professors were jurists of great renown, men who made the reputation of the Romanian school of Law, all future ministers or future cultural figures. One of the professors of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy whose lectures he attended was Titu Maiorescu.

As a student at Bucharest his means were modest; he lived in a furnished room and had few needs. He was by nature temperate; he ate little; he often bought cigarettes singly; he would make a bottle of wine do for several meals; he rarely went out with friends and even then returned home early to write or read. At that period he wrote to a girl cousin in Moldavia the following lines which show the romantic pose of the young provincial:

I am alone in Bucharest. For several hours a day I read; for the rest I lounge on Podul Mogoşoaiei [the street now known as Calea Victoriei] when it is warm, and when it is cold, in cafés. In Bucharest there are many comicalities, many laughable faces, many fools who hover fascinated around the same worthless attractions. . . . You watch them all, you do as they do or laugh at them and go home—if you have a home—with a layer of indifference around your heart. Here you take off your hat, look in the glass and see how the hairs of your beard and whiskers—though you shave them continually—are aspiring to come to light. You remember that the years are passing and that you must take a place in that troubled sea which is called society; you remember that so far you are an absolute nobody; you raise your forehead proudly to look the future in the face. . . .[5]

From this time date his letters to Duiliu Ioanin, a friend and confidant of his youth. The recently published letters to Ioanin [6] are precious evidence for Zamfirescu's beginnings as a writer. They are the letters of a young provincial influenced by romantic readings, who analyzes his spiritual states through the prism of literature and discovers his literary vocation. His ease of expression and pleasure in writing emerge from the pages of this literary diary of 1879–81. "Has it ever happened to you to feel an indispensable necessity to write, to write furiously, to put your soul into letters and the letters on to fifteen sheets of paper?" [7] To Ioanin he unbosomed himself about the intensity of his poetic inspiration, his "governess with the Jew's harp," "madly beloved," and he retells his favorite readings; Young, Lamartine, Byron, Gautier, and in particular Castelar:

I don't know whether you know Castelar's work *Memories of Italy*. It really is the most splendid creation of our century, a living, titanic work; a giant which lives on the bones of graveyards, the ruins of monuments, the life of the past, but a giant so gigantic, so great that you are really proud when you think that the human brain in the nineteenth century can produce such colossal things. It is the faith of the Brahmins in the immortality of the soul, united to the thought of Plato and the eloquence of Bossuet; it is Lamartine's poetry written on the blackened stones of the Coliseum; it is the melancholy of the exile whispered to dreaming Venice and to the hallucination of the sea; in a word it is the greatest and most beautiful poem ever written in prose.[8]

Romantic too are his fits of spleen and disgust and his sufferings over an unhappy love affair of that time, which seems to have left deep traces inasmuch as the memory of that Eliza returns persistently in his youthful poems and prose.

I am seized with a disgust for everything, yes, everything, beginning from the Milky Way in the sky right down to the depths of the tomb. . . . I am seized

again by a fury of poetry . . . then come the hours of boredom in which my spirit, unaffected by any exterior influence, judges and weighs everything. . . .[9]

Besides these introspections the letters also contain very realistic notes of life in Focşani, with parties in gardens where people at neighboring tables eat dried herrings and the women "raise a hurricane of sand with their dresses and deposit it in our pockets."

After taking his degree in law in the summer of 1880, Zamfirescu was appointed deputy magistrate at Hîrşova, a small town on the Dobrudjan bank of the Danube. At Hîrşova he felt isolated ("Hîrşova is beautiful, but sad"). His post as procurator disappointed him. "Decidedly I am not cut out to be a procurator," he wrote to Ioanin after only three weeks of term. From September 1880 to January 1881 Zamfirescu sent over twenty letters to Ioanin, including two in the form of a journal, "a register of my thoughts," in which his obsession with Eliza was mixed up with the daily life of a procurator in a provincial place which was at that time far from any larger town.

The letters from Dobrudja are sprinkled with events and little pictures of places and people. Dobrudja had recently passed under Romanian administration, in 1877 to be precise. The mail came twice a week by steamer, and more rarely in winter when the Danube was frozen. The procurator's duties included trips to the villages in his district to examine misdemeanors and crimes. Zamfirescu traversed the roads and valleys around Hîrşova, saw Mahometan villages in the mountains of Babadag, put up at various houses, Turkish or Romanian, and observed the rural squalor and proved himself a conscientious and human procurator. In his solitude at Hîrşova he began to write prose sketches and short stories inspired by the local scenery, or romantic tales inspired by his unhappy love for Eliza. His first short story appeared in the newspaper *România liberă* (Free Romania) in December 1881, a piece of romantic prose entitled "*O pagină din viaţa lui Johann Strauss*" (A Page from the Life of Johann Strauss). At the same time he began to publish in *România liberă* a series entitled "*Tipuri şi portrete*" (Types and Portraits). [10] His correspondence with Ioanin continued throughout 1881, at first from Tîrgovişte, where he was appointed procurator (February-March 1881). After that he resigned from the magistracy and established himself provisionally at Focşani. His letters of summer 1881 tell of cultural life in the provinces, his excursions with his uncle or the painter Ştefan Mincu, the concerts of a "singer and courtezan" who made him weep—all passed through the filter of literature.

Zamfirescu left the magistracy hoping that he could live by briefs and by a post as teacher of French in the secondary school at Focşani. In reality the demon of writing had taken control of him. In 1882 he moved to Bucharest, where he enrolled in the bar and became a journalist on *România liberă*. *România liberă* had been founded in 1877 as an independent paper by Mihail Kogălniceanu, the great leader of the *paşoptişti* ("Forty-eighters"), the progressives who had organized the 1848 revolutionary movement in the Principalities. When Zamfirescu joined the paper alongside Vlahuţă and Delavrancea, *România liberă* had become the official organ of the movement *Junimea* (Youth); the Junimist political group Maiorescu-Carp-Rosetti was on the way up. Even before the arrival of Zamfirescu and Delavrancea, the paper was considered the publication with the best literary and cultural columns.

Zamfirescu's journalistic phase lasted until the end of 1884. It was a period of intense activity in the editorial office; he regularly published reviews, feuilletons, critical essays, polemical articles, or correspondence. The column "Palabras" made him known under the pseudo-Spanish signature of "Don Padil." Later Zamfirescu ruthlessly scrapped his *România liberă* prose. Until recently Don Padil has remained buried in the files of the paper. [11]

Journalism made Zamfirescu settle at Bucharest. He installed himself in a hotel, inaugurating a style of Bucharest bachelor life—between hotel and restaurant—which he always preferred, even later in life. He frequented the theater—in fact, he wrote a play, *Prea tîrziu* (Too Late)—as well as Bohemian life and the inevitable Bucharest eating-house, which he later described in his short story "*Petrică*." Nevertheless—and this is an interesting indication of his psychology—unlike Caragiale, at this time a friend of his, he was not a man of the café. He used to go about with Delavrancea and Vlahuţă, who with him were members of *Tinerimea artistică* (Artistic Youth), which later became *Cercul amicilor literaturii şi artei române* (The Circle of Friends of Romanian Literature and Art).

In the spring of 1880 the appearance of the poem *Levante şi Calavryta* (Levante and Calavryta) in the review *Literatorul* (The Man of Letters) had launched the unknown Zamfirescu. Since 1875–76, his last years at school, he had been writing poetry. The first review that published him was *Ghimpele* (The Thorn), a satirical and humorous magazine, which five years earlier had published the beginner Caragiale. *Literatorul* considered itself "the only literary review in the capital." It had recently been launched by the poet Alexandru Macedonski, a virulent opponent of Eminescu. Macedonski was at that time seeking to inaugurate a new school of poetry. He had not yet written his *Nopţi* (Nights) and *Rondeluri* (Rondels). He was just back from Paris, where he had breathed the atmosphere of the growth of Symbolism, and was seeking to start an analogous movement in Romanian poetry, which was then dominated by the influence of Eminescu. Zamfirescu read his poem before the *Literatorul* circle under the chairmanship of that eccentric aesthete and Francophile, Macedonski.

The circumstances were revealed by Macedonski himself later in 1892, when his own work had established him as the chief exponent of Romanian Symbolism. Macedonski relates how in 1880 a young university student "with the brow of an Athenian and the eyes of a poet" made his appearance at the salon of *Literatorul*. The youth read "harmoniously" a poem entitled "*Levante şi Calavryta*." "The unknown of yesterday was the celebrity of tomorrow. Rumanian poetry had been awaiting an innovator; he had arrived!" exclaimed Macedonski. [12]

At the moment his reaction was enthusiastic: "We have today to introduce into the arena of literary publicity a new name, Duiliu Zamfirescu, whose poem we print below . . ." he wrote next day in *Literatorul*. In four consecutive numbers of the review Macedonski devoted to the poem a "course of critical analysis" of its value and especially of the merits of its prosody.

Zamfirescu's break with Macedonski was as abrupt as his reception at *Literatorul* had been enthusiastic. It throws light on Bucharest literary life behind the scenes at that moment. Soon after his reception at *Literatorul*, where he published his early poetry for two years, Zamfirescu began to look in another direction, toward *Junimea*. Now the Junimists were the protectors of Eminescu. When Macedonski in his violent bias against Eminescu wrote his unfortunate epigram against the already sick poet in 1884, Zamfirescu replied in harsh terms, which infuriated Macedonski. The latter accused Zamfirescu, among other things, of ingratitude to the man who had given him his start. Later on, relations were resumed but were never again intimate.

His work with *România liberă* ceased in autumn 1884. It was then that Zamfirescu decided to go into diplomacy. In February 1885 he passed the entrance competition for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the same time he returned to his work of teaching; he taught Romanian at Sfîntul Gheorghe High School at Bucharest, where his friend Anghel Demetriescu was headmaster, and French at the "New Institute for Young Ladies," run by a woman who at that time played a

part in the intellectual life of Bucharest, Elena Miller-Verghi, with whom Zamfirescu remained friends for a long while.

There exists a portrait of the young Zamfirescu as he was in 1883, the year when his first volume of poems *Fără titlu* appeared. His friend of those days, Nicolae Petraşcu, wrote a monograph about him after Zamfirescu's death. Here is an extract from that portrait:

It was about 1883, one evening at a performance at the National Theatre. The curtain had come down and as I strolled through the foyer, looking at the various portraits of artistes, I suddenly saw in the middle of the hall a young man of attractive good looks, talking quietly to two young ladies who were listening to him and watching him with pleasure.

The young man was about 24 or 25; he was of middling height, with a slim figure and a mysterious harmony in his movements. When I approached him and observed him more closely, I saw his face with its white cheeks, suffused with a wave of pink, his beautiful straight nose, a mouth to match, with warm speech and a sweet smile playing on it; his neck rounded with youthful delicacy; his silky black hair, left to grow long as with the Florentines in Renaissance portraits; his lively chestnut eye and narrow arched eyebrows; a pictorial head recalling the gracefulness of figures by Guido Reni. He wore a black jacket, buttoned up, trousers with narrow stripes, fine shoes; in his left hand he held his top hat and gloves.

That is how Petraşcu describes the young Zamfirescu's toilette at the time when he was working in the editorial office of *România Liberă*:

In the morning, to take him to the *România liberă* office, I used to call at the Hotel Metropol. In the room scented with eau-de-cologne, standing in front of the great mirror, having recently washed and done his hair carefully, you would find Duiliu knotting his tie. He had a movement of his own, with the fingers of his hand in the air, when he was bringing the end of the tie to make the bow, which had to be perfect in one go. He used to smile when he saw you come in, and without hurrying in the least, although he was half an hour late, he would tell a joke to make you laugh heartily, take his waistcoat which he put on slowly, again with a special movement, then the impeccably tailored jacket—though it did have a little shine at the elbows. Lastly came the turn of the top hat with its broad ribbon and 1830 brim, which he would smooth with a piece of velvet till it shone like the mirror. Settling the hat on his head was another important matter. He took in his hand the two locks of hair on his forehead, moving them gently to right and left, and then pressed the hat over the hair, which gathered softly beneath it. On leaving, from a distance, he stole another discreet glance at the mirror.[13]

Meanwhile in March 1883 Titu Maiorescu for the first time noted in his *Însemnări zilnice* (Daily Jottings) the name of Duiliu Zamfires-

cu. And so, shortly after the appearance of his first volume *Fără titlu*, Zamfirescu was received at the circle of *Junimea*. In his column "*Palabras*" in April he discreetly flattered Maiorescu by writing: "On Wednesdays vulgarity disappears and in its place comes peace and poetry. Mr. Maiorescu has the gift of gathering together almost all our men of letters and a large part of the young writers. . . ."

Maiorescu was at that time at the height of his career as head of the literary side of *Junimea* and as the master of Romanian criticism. Maiorescu's personality and his theories, which were based on the supreme principle of dissociating the beautiful from other values and were brilliantly expressed in his critical prose, were the magnet which drew around it the men of Romanian culture in its great period at the end of the nineteenth century. Under the wing of *Junimea* stood all the great writers of the time, including Eminescu, Creangă, and Caragiale. Zamfirescu was captivated by Titu Maiorescu (twenty years older than himself) and from the start felt at home in the intellectual milieu of *Junimea*. He began to frequent the meetings, to take part in readings, and was present when the elderly Alecsandri read his verse play *Fîntîna Blanduziei* (The Fountain of Blandusia) in Maiorescu's house.

In 1884 he took part at *Junimea*'s annual banquet, which was in honor of Alecsandri. The real literary interchange between Maiorescu and Zamfirescu, which has become part of the history of Romanian literature and was recorded in their correspondence, began in 1885. In fact Zamfirescu's entry into literature began with the short stories published in *Convorbiri literare*; in 1886 "*Noapte bună*" (Good Night), "*Locotenentul Sterie*" (Lieutenant Sterie), "*Spre Mare*" (To the Sea), and in 1887 "*Conu Alecu Zăgănescu*" (Mr. Alecu Zăgănescu) and "*Subprefectul*" (The Subprefect). By 1885, Zamfirescu had written a great deal, but decisive success was slow in coming. Besides journalistic writings in *România liberă* he had published poems, especially occasional poems, and had written two plays, *O suferinţă* (An Affliction) in 1882 and *Prea tîrziu* (Too Late) in 1884, the latter being performed only once, and a novel, *În faţa vieţii* (In Face of Life), in 1884, which was attacked in an ironical tone by the socialist critic Dobrogeanu-Gherea. The fact is, it took time for him to throw off the neo-Romantic influences of his early years, and in that sense his début was prolonged.

A little before the appearance of his short stories in book form (May 1888), Zamfirescu left for Italy. On the evening of May 4 he gave a farewell supper at the "Grand Hotel Boulevard" at Bucharest. The guests were Titu Maiorescu, Caragiale, Nicolae Petraşcu, and several

other writers and artists. At the moment of leaving Romania Zamfirescu was a well-known writer on the Romanian scene. Two days later he left to take up his post as secretary in the Romanian legation at Rome. His tour of duty abroad was to last until 1906.

Zamfirescu was appointed to Italy by an inspired decision of Petre Carp, the chief of the Conservative party, at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs. Carp is supposed to have said: "As a poet Duiliu must go to Rome!" With the exception of a short posting to Athens and to Brussels (1892–94) Zamfirescu remained *en poste* at Rome until his return to Romania. Fortune willed that he should lead the life of a diplomat in Europe's peaceful years at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth, when the duties of a Romanian diplomat at Rome, Brussels, or Athens left a great deal of time free from the business of chancery and the obligations of protocol. His career was fulfilling an old ambition expressed in youth: "to be born in a sunny land, to be able to earn one's living easily, to have the sea nearby, and above all to be free." Also it fitted certain innate tendencies to be a "man of the world": respect for certain "formalities," amiability, politeness, and deportment formed part of the personal aesthetic which was essential to his conception of life. Similarly he could not conceive his life without a strict program of daily writing and of discipline in all he did. In his "memoirs of diplomatic life" written much later Zamfirescu depicted himself in his persona as a career diplomat in the fashionable life of Rome at the end of the nineteenth century, with shooting parties, walks at the Villa Borghese, and drawing-room conversations. Some sketches written immediately after his arrival in Italy may serve as illustrations to this period of his life. In a way diplomacy offered him the ideal solution; behind the screen of the man of the world—which did not displease him—he preserved the independence of his personal life and the time available for literature.

His encounter with Italy, which played such a large role in his life, was an ideal experience for a Romanian writer of the late nineteenth century. Zamfirescu is the only Romanian writer and diplomat who carried out his Italian travels in the fashion and spirit of a traveler of "la belle époque"; with hat on head and Baedeker in hand, he was a cultivated traveler who had read Taine's *Philosophie de l'Art* and *Voyage en Italie* and fallen in love with Italy. Before him Alecsandri had also been an ardent Italophile, but with less interest in art and ideas and with less sensibility.

Zamfirescu's love affair with Italy is an important chapter in his biography because he shared his impressions lavishly. His letters of

1888 and 1889 contain what amounts to travel reports full of the impressions of a delighted or astounded traveler, of descriptions of scenery, museums, and monuments: Venice, Florence, and above all, Naples. *Convorbiri literare* published some of these letters for their readers, who must have read them with the pleasure of those to whom a journey to Italy was still something novel.

The tone of the letters is the joyous, carefree tone of a young man swept away by the delight of life in the sunshine of Italy: "we are young and healthy at Sorrento . . . in the midst of these Neapolitan loafers; there is a demure peace on the waters and in the sky; the flowers hang on the branches with a plump limpness, like a woman's hand protruding from the bath. . . ." [14] From Capri, where he bought himself a red beret and walked in the footsteps of Lamartine, in a letter to his friend Nicolae Petraşcu he relates adventures of "rakish debauchery," mingling Italian expressions with Balkan-Oriental lingo. Not only his letters, but his poems in barcarole style at that time and the short stories from that moment of romantic enthusiasm are full of fictionalized autobiography.

At the end of August 1889, after a trip in the Gulf of Naples to Sorrento, Capri, and Ischia, Zamfirescu wrote "*Singurătatea*" (Loneliness),[15] a short story full of atmosphere and of erudition, written under the excitement of contact with the past and under the influence of readings in history. He paid visits to the Castelli Romani and stopped at Castel Gandolfo. The Palace of the Popes seen in the moonlight gave him the impression that "its stone concealed so many unread lessons that it had become a sort of masonic square on which, if you looked long enough, you could believe that you saw what was not there." The memories of antiquity, "the hiding-places with the secrets of feudal times," "the Renaissance, the genius of lines, above which the papal tiaras appear like cabalistic signs" confronted the figure of Goethe who at Castel Gandolfo spent days "full of the serenity which is induced in us by the classical." Zamfirescu himself began to be visited by those moments of "serenity" which are linked with the contemplation of the classical ideal.

Directly autobiographical is "*O vînătoare de vulpi în Campania romană*" (A Fox Hunt in the Roman Campagna), [16] conceived in 1889. As a young legation secretary Zamfirescu was often invited into the Roman world "in the midst of a flock of Countesses, Princesses, Baronesses and other creatures with coats of arms, who chirrup, talk or bark according to the nature of their throats or wits." The story describes a hunt on horseback in the Campagna near Rome. Also as a diplomat he was of course an ex-officio member of the club called La

Caccia. Although horses were a passion of his, he preferred on such occasions the role of observer "wedged in the seats of a landau" between beautiful women. The sketch is written with the delight of the man who discovers "the pleasure of pagan delight in living" and the charm of the women in Roman high-life idealized through literature and Italian painting. The past and ruins alternate with the episodes of the mounted hunt of the present-day Romans. The tone is now enthusiastic, now melancholy. The prose is erudite and fluent, pleasant reading which sometimes makes us smile at the slightly snobbish display of aristocratic names. The taste for history and the pictorial sense which Zamfirescu always had have here found a suitable field. He became deeply impregnated with the landscape of Italy and with Roman and Greek antiquity.

Of Rome, which he went around examining for years on end, his letters speak in a solemn and studious tone. The study of Roman history always "entranced" him, from the time when he began to penetrate "the galleries of those divine criminals who, like Nero and Caligula, Claudius and Heliogabalus, have left us enormous palaces." His reading of the Latin classics, of Tacitus and Pliny, and of Gibbon and Mommsen and his walks through ancient Rome fascinated him all the time that he lived in Italy. Rome was also a confirmation of the Latinity of the Romanians, a conception to which a patriot like himself could not remain indifferent, even if he sometimes laughed at pilgrims to Trajan's Column such as Badea Cîrţan.[17] "You gain a sort of dignity, of conviction, as you re-read Roman history with your hand on the cold stone," he wrote to Nagruzzi. His tone becomes melancholy in the face of the landscape of Latium, "land of tombs," a landscape which he particularly loved.

> Summer will come and I shall be able to recommence my wanderings by velocipede along the wondrous roads of the Roman Campagna . . . there is nothing to compare with the spiritual state produced by this solitude: valleys and hills on every side flooded with light! Not a factory, not a house! The aqueducts stretched upon arches of cyclopic masonry vanishing into the transparant line of the horizon! Now and then, a monumental ruin; silence, silence over all. . . . And you by yourself, weary and with your spiritual faculties reduced to a minimum of impressionability, catch in passing the image of a bend in the Tiber, the silhouette of a fir which spreads its sunshade on a hilltop. Or there passes through your mind a fragment of nostalgic memory from other times, other worlds. . . .[18]

Zamfirescu owes much to Italy: the formation of a vision, an "ideality," to use his own expression, and the fulfillment of a vocation.

Soon after his arrival, in the period of intense hedonistic living and feverish discovery of Italy, Zamfirescu met his future wife. Henriette Allievi was the daughter of the senator and director-general of the Bank of Italy, Antonio Allievi, a Lombard and an ardent Mazzinian, and of Countess Fanny Bonacina-Spini of the lesser nobility which sympathized with the Carbonari. Fanny's letters to Garibaldi's friend Luciano Manara were preserved in the family, as well as "summonses and banishment orders of the Austrian police, revolutionary cockades and programs of secret meetings." Henriette Allievi captivated him by something poetic which emanated from her being:

> Although she is not in general beautiful, she has in the shadow of her brow a subdued light which comes from on high, from somewhere where it is warm, and her dark, deep, remote eyes look out with a sort of taste of pain which penetrates your soul. She is one of the rare women who do not talk much and who tremble when they speak a more friendly word to you.[19]

He was, as he wrote to Jacob Negruzzi, "not swept away."

> After a long reckoning with myself I have decided that it is a good thing for me to get married. And I'm doing so. Without being in the least swept away—because the thing is happening without the hysteria which generally accompanies such acts—I am occupied with the doings and sayings of real life: now it's wall-paper, now my birth certificate, now one person says "You're too so and so," another says otherwise, and although I shrug my shoulders and do what I have to do, yet, when I come home in the evening, I may look in the mirror and not see myself, so concentrated and introverted in my mind. In fact I don't think I have ever had my thoughts so constricted from an instinct of self-defense. I feel as though they were bundled up and sometimes have the sensation of being able to hold them in one hand as tangibly as a sheaf of osier shoots. As a matter of fact, the coagulation of my formerly diffused ego is natural. I have prepared everything myself, and I must myself take responsibility.[20]

The marriage took place in March 1890. Henriette gave him three children, a girl and two boys born between 1891 and 1896. After the birth of the first child he wrote to Maiorescu:

> I have new things to tell you about: for some days I've had a child—a baby girl. At what point the idea that I was to have a child ends and the fact that I have one begins is not quite clear in my own mind. I only know that there has arrived in my house and settled into my thoughts an unknown baby, which stretches out two white arms and beats the air with its palms, a stranger who knows no one. And I'm so fond of it . . . terribly fond. Just imagine, before it

was born, I had decided that it was bound to be a boy, and with fancy's strong but foolish facility for giving an almost tangible form to its own creations, I already saw him and knew him, whereas the idea of having a girl was intolerable. The mystery of nature has willed otherwise, and with equal assurance I cannot know how it would have been if it had been a boy.[21]

Zamfirescu was a loving and very attentive father in spite of his literary and diplomatic occupations. Henriette remained in the shadow of the man so successful with women; she probably suffered, judging by what can be guessed from the letters of the remorseful Duiliu.

In the summer of 1892 he was moved to the legation at Athens, where he stayed only three months, together with his friend Ollanescu Ascanio, who was head of mission. Coming with his poetic imagination fired by the mirage of Greece, he was enchanted by the Parthenon. It was then that he wrote, among the most beautiful of his verses dedicated to antiquity, the poem "*Pe Acropole*" (On the Acropolis). On the other hand the train journey through Greece, the reality behind the fascinating names, Corinth, Megara, Eleusis, disappointed him. In a station he was nearly attacked by some drunken Evzones for being a Romanian, because of the conflict with Greece, which was then at its height, over the problem of the Romanians in Macedonia!

In January 1893 he was posted to Brussels, where he stayed until September 1894. Figures from the diplomatic world of Brussels in the time of King Leopold were later unexpectedly recalled, as a symbolic act of homage, in his preface to the fourth edition of *Viaţa la ţară*. In fact, on the literary level Brussels marks a date. Here in 1893 Zamfirescu wrote *Viaţa la ţară*, the prelude to a decade of major literary creation. When we consider how Romanian the novel is, the words which he wrote at that period to Trandafir Djuvara take on a peculiar prominence and significance: "I have nothing interesting to say from here because I live an inward life whose kernel is always Romania, while the outward life has no importance for us." [22]

It is a striking fact that what is most durable in Zamfirescu's work, that is to say his Romanian work, was written in those years abroad, in Brussels and in Italy. All the charm of Italy could not supplant the overwhelming emotion from which sprang the Comăneşteanu cycle. And who loved Italy more than Duiliu Zamfirescu? It was he who wrote these words: "If I were not Romanian, homesick for our lonely plains, I should wish my hand of clay to rest in the Campo Verano at Rome." [23] The words sound like a sort of testament, and in fact are so. In spite of his worship of Italy and Latinity, his heart was turned

toward "our lonely plains," whose melancholy he loved as he loved the Roman Campagna.

His homesickness for Romania keeps coming back like a leitmotif in his letters. Every year he used to return there, sometimes even at the height of summer when other Romanians were going abroad, because he was "craving for our Romanian soil, its heat, the faces of its people." They were returns accompanied by emotion and the joy of seeing Romanian nature again: "I crossed the mountains with my throat choking with emotion." He would go to Bucharest to see his friends and colleagues in *Junimea* and to Focşani, where he had his family.

The umbilical cord joining him to Romania was his correspondence with *Junimea* and especially with Maiorescu, a correspondence of which he, the distant partner, was the driving force. Zamfirescu regularly and fervently maintained this connection by letter. In the first place, he had a high opinion of Maiorescu, whom he admired both as a man and an intellect. Secondly, Maiorescu was a foreground figure in literary and political life and Zamfirescu himself always wished not to be forgotten on the stage where Romanian literature and politics were being played. One would not have expected political ambition in Zamfirescu, a man born to write and dream. This ambition was linked to his exalted patriotism, which after his return to Romania stole so much of his time and energy.

The connection between Titu Maiorescu and Duiliu Zamfirescu, which has become particularly clear since the posthumous publication of their letters, forms an independent chapter in Romanian literary history. It is a literary friendship important for the Romanian scene, a friendship begun in Bucharest between 1883 and 1888 and continued by letter till 1906, then terminated by the rupture of 1909. Zamfirescu tended his connection with Maiorescu with sincere affection and dutiful veneration, a fact to which Maiorescu was responsive. He rightly saw in the man nearly twenty years younger than himself one of the most convinced disciples of his ideas on the art of literature. The way in which their relationship developed, especially after Zamfirescu's return to Romania, can be deduced from Zamfirescu's letters and Maiorescu's *Însemnări zilnice*. Becoming a literary personality in virtue of the talent which Maiorescu had been the first to recognize, Zamfirescu felt justified in freeing himself from Maiorescu's tutelage. When in 1896 he held aloof for the first time and published a short piece in another review than *Convorbiri literare*, namely in *Literatura şi arta română*,[24] Maiorescu felt it as "a betrayal," and still more so when in 1901 he published "*Îndreptări*" (Guide-lines) in the

same review whose editor, Nicolae Petrascu, was an ex-Junimist now detested by Maiorescu. The truth is that Zamfirescu remained loyal to *Convorbiri literare* till the end of his life, though many writers abandoned it, sometimes dissociating themselves from Maiorescu with a blazing row as Caragiale did.

The golden age of the Maiorescu-Zamfirescu connection was in the decade when Zamfirescu was at the height of his creative powers. One thing appears with complete clarity: the part played by Maiorescu in Zamfirescu's literary destiny. It was the part of a model and a master-craftsman. As a matter of fact, in an important letter written on his fortieth birthday (October 30, 1898) Zamfirescu analyzes his life and proclaims the overwhelming influence of Maiorescu, whom he calls "*il mio buon duce, cum zice Dante*" (my good guide, as Dante says). This role of mentor and literary confidant was played by Maiorescu in the crucial period of the writing of the Comăneşteanu cycle. Of the roughly 200 letters sent to Maiorescu, over 150 were written between 1889 and 1900. It emerges that Zamfirescu kept Maiorescu informed of his literary projects, commenting on them as he went on, and afterwards when they were finished, sent them to *Convorbiri literare* and awaited the reaction of the critic and his fellow Junimists. Almost everything that he wrote in Italy, i.e., his chief work, was published first in *Convorbiri literare* and then in book form. *Viaţa la ţară* appeared in *Convorbiri literare* in 1894; *Tănase Scatiu* in 1895; *În război* in 1898; *Lydda—Scrisori romane*, first part in 1898; second part in 1904; as well as his short stories and poems.

In 1906 came the long-desired return to Romania. Zamfirescu accepted the post of secretary general at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under a government led by the old Conservatives and without consulting the Junimists—an untimely decision, probably due to his conviction that "in the history of our little state one cannot play an important role when in opposition." This was a political miscalculation, because a few months later his patrons Carp and Maiorescu came to power! Zamfirescu installed his household at the vineyard at Faraoane, which he had recently bought with the idea of assuring himself the "material basis" for an independent life. In the same year his wife, Henriette, died in Italy.

This third part of his life is dominated by his critical and polemical (rather than creative) work in literature and, in his last years, in politics. The most important event was the recognition accorded to the writer by his election to the Romanian Academy in June 1908. He won twenty-four votes against four for Delavrancea, the other candidate. His election seemed natural and was well received in the literary world. This is worth stressing because Zamfirescu could not be compared at that time for popularity with men like Caragiale, Vlahuţă, or Delavrancea. He had done nothing to popularize his work. He had lived for almost twenty years far from Romania, and when he had returned, he had not been able to acclimatize himself to the atmosphere of the Romanian literary world. The order of the day was an unaffected style, hostile to etiquette, continuing the Bohemian ways of Caragiale's time. Zamfirescu's stand-offish deportment seemed pretentious in the eyes of those at the literary coffee-house and the unsophisticated contributors to the review *Sămănatorul* (The Sower). It is curious how much his contemporaries were impressed by the famous "bearing" of Duiliu Zamfirescu.

Nevertheless his election to the Academy was almost unanimously approved, the one exception being the Transylvanian writers who could not forgive him for his attacks on Slavici in an article of 1903, "*Literatura română şi scriitorii ardeleni*" (Romanian Literature and the Transylvanian Writers). In that article, Zamfirescu contested the literary value of "the peasant mawkishness" of Slavici's novels and Coşbuc's poetry. These attacks are largely unjust and are to be explained by the fact that the Romanian Academy had awarded their prize for a historical novel to Slavici for his *Din bătrîni* (Tales of Our Forefathers) and not to Zamfirescu for *În război*. In 1908 criticism was unanimous in its judgment in favor of Zamfirescu. Maiorescu had declared him the most active of the poets and prose writers of the reigning generation. "He is perhaps the greatest writer we have," pronounced Mihail Dragomirescu in 1907. Even Iorga, the head of the Sămănătorist school, called him in 1908 "artistically our topmost author." The press of the Modernists (Minulescu, Octav Densuşianu, Macedonski, and the Symbolists) likewise supported him against Caragiale, Delavrancea, and Vlahuţă, who were also candidates for the Academy.

Zamfirescu's inaugural speech and Maiorescu's reply took place a year later, in May 1909. Zamfirescu's speech unleashed one of the most celebrated controversies in Romanian literary history; the debate which he launched was essential for Romanian literature at that moment, and his attack conformed to his excessively polemical temperament. In his speech he raised the question of the aesthetic value of folk literature, contesting the value of Alecsandri's folklore anthology and hence the tendentious literature in which the peasant was exalted. His target was as usual the Transylvanian writers: Slavici, Goga, Coşbuc, and Popovici-Bănăţeanul—that is to say, the favorites

of the Sămănătorist and Poporanist schools. Paradoxically, it happened that Maiorescu himself gave the answer, an answer in which Maiorescu did battle with Zamfirescu, who was defending precisely Maiorescu's own ideas on art! In his reply Maiorescu took up the defense of folk literature, repeating ideas from previous writings which Zamfirescu had purposely ignored and in which Maiorescu had established the necessity of the literature of the Transylvanian writers. Zamfirescu had been imprudent. Maiorescu was out for his blood and decided to give him a "lesson." In the following months Zamfirescu's speech was at the center of literary discussions and polemics. It was attacked by Iorga's Sămănătorist journal *Neamul Românesc* (The Romanian Race), the Poporanist *Viața Românească* (Romanian Life) of Jassy, the Transylvanian review *Țara noastră* (Our Land), *Luceafărul* (The Morning Star) of Sibiu, and others; it was defended by *Convorbiri literare*, where Maiorescu's views were in the minority. *Convorbiri literare* spoke of "the Socialist hoax called Poporanism . . . the absurd claim to explain literature by economic conditions," asserting that Zamfirescu "has lashed this deviation with ridicule." Another who came to Zamfirescu's defense was Eugen Lovinescu, who wrote in *Convorbiri literare* in 1911 an admirable study of his work, pointing out its value.

Today, from a distance, the speech about Poporanism appears an amalgam, consisting on the one hand of accurate ideas and intuitions about the need for Romanian literature to emerge from the peasant universe and be modernized, and on the other of exaggerated attitudes. Zamfirescu was subject to such outbursts, which had their counterpart on another level—his craze for duels, even at an advanced age. The speech at the Academy was a duel of ideas against several opponents at once: the Transylvanians, the Sămănătorists, the Poporanists, and, in the last instance, Maiorescu. The break with Maiorescu was complete; the two friends of a lifetime only met once again, in 1913.

In 1909 Zamfirescu was appointed Romanian delegate to the European Commission of the Danube with its seat at Galatz. Henceforth his life was divided among Galatz, his vineyard at Faraoane, and Bucharest, to which he came for the meetings of the Academy. In 1910 he read before the Academy his heroic poem *Miriță*. In 1911 he presented an important study, *Metafizica cuvintelor și estetica literară* (The Metaphysic of Words and Literary Aesthetics). As an academician he was very active in meetings, making his contribution to various committees, giving lectures, taking part in the Academy's festivities and other events. Among his activities was that of member

of the Playreading committee, in which he functioned for five years, reading and making notes on dozens of plays. Between 1912 and 1915 he himself yielded to his old passion for the stage. He wrote four plays. *Lumina nouă* (New Light) and *O amică* (A Lady Friend) played in 1912; *Poezia depărtării* (The Poetry of Distance), in 1913; and *Voichița*, in 1915. They were plays of a poet and novelist attracted by the mirage of dramatic creativity, played by the best actors of the day—and how many good actors there were—Lucia Sturdza, Tony Bulandra, Maria Filotti, G. Ciprian, etc.!

On the eve of war Zamfirescu, pugnacious as ever, had launched a new debate in the literary world. In two articles in *Convorbiri literare* in 1916 and a paper given to the Academy, he had questioned the value of "modernist" poetry. The poets challenged were the Symbolists of the new generation, various disciples of Macedonski, or poets of a new style who were starting a revolution in poetic diction. The discussion was at its height when war broke out.

In August 1914 Zamfirescu had had an intuition that it was the start of an event with immense consequences for contemporary history. He had felt the need to write his memoirs, but he lived to write only a series of political portraits of the greatest interest. "The tragic circumstances through which Europe is passing as a result of the universal war induce me to write these notes from the Romanian point of view. . . . " It is a pity that this project was not completed, for there is no doubt that as a writer of memoirs he was in the first rank.

Zamfirescu was against the entry of Romania into the war. They were the years of neutrality, in which Romanian opinion was divided between the partisans of the Entente and those of the Triple Alliance, to which Romania had adhered in 1885. In a paper to the Academy, *"Sufletul războaielor în trecut și în prezent"* (The Soul of Wars in the Past and the Present), he based his appeal on the unpreparedness of Romania and the immense sacrifice which would be required of the common soldier, "the soul of wars." But he was talking as a humanist, not as a politician. Politics required that Romania should enter the war. In 1916 Romania declared war on the Central Powers. The disaster at the front and the immense sufferings of the population made the ardently patriotic Zamfirescu suffer deeply. Both his sons were at the front, and one was wounded.

In December 1916 Zamfirescu took refuge at Odessa, loading the belongings of the Danube Commission on the steamer *Carolus Primus*. From Odessa he wrote: "I am the spectator of the most formidable political transformation that ever has been seen beneath the sun: the dethronement of Tsarism and the installation of a parliamentary-

republican form of government." In December 1917 he noted: "For three days Odessa has been the battlefield between the Maximalists and the Ukrainians" (i.e., between the Bolsheviks and the partisans of the Ukrainian Petliura). On the Romanian front the bolshevized Russian troops were abandoning their positions, and Odessa was bombarded. In January 1918 Zamfirescu left Odessa with the Danube Commission's ship and returned to Romania, to Jassy, with his health shaken. There the situation was disastrous. His house and vineyard at Faraoane had been in the occupied zone and had been ransacked by the Germans. It was then that part of his archives with precious papers and letters disappeared.

It was in this troubled period that Zamfirescu published in Bucharest a collection of verses inspired by a belated sentiment for a young woman from his time in Odessa, together with earlier poems. The volume is entitled *Pe Marea Neagră* (On the Black Sea). In *Convorbiri literare* in 1919 appeared the short story "*O muză*" (A Muse). Zamfirescu was elected vice-president of the Academy in the autumn session of 1918. Relations with his former adversaries, the Poporanists, had so much improved that he was one of the supporters of the Bessarabian Socialist writer C. Stere and of Ibrăileanu as candidates for the Academy. Finally he returned to journalism on the paper *Îndreptarea* (The Guide-line), belonging to the Averescu group,[25] which claimed to be outside politics, especially the Liberal sort which Zamfirescu so much detested. The title of the paper was Zamfirescu's idea and revived one of his leitmotifs: the redirecting or regeneration of the Romanians.

In January 1920, with Averescu's triumph in the elections, Zamfirescu was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Averescu government. As senator for Putna he was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies, a function which he fulfilled until the fall of the Averescu government in 1922. The year 1921 gave him a mortal blow, the death of his younger son in a duel. A year later, while he was preparing for the publishing house *Cultura Naţională* a reprint of the complete Comăneşteanu cycle, he died of liver trouble on June 3 at the convent of Agapia, where he was on holiday.

CHAPTER 2

Novels, I: Viaţa la ţară

Good and bad, boyars, *arendaşi* and peasants—I have tried to give a picture of their times.

FROM afar, the Romanian world of the years 1890–1900, a world in full political and social effervescence, was for the author-diplomat a subject of preoccupation and reflection. His correspondence reveals a lucid and often virulent critic of Romanian society.

Shortly after his arrival in Italy, he wrote to Titu Maiorescu, "From here I see our country dispassionately, with its good and evil," but after that he adds with passion, "We are a nation of chatterboxes. The population of the towns is stupid, while the ruling class is a clique of charlatans. I am disgusted when I read the parcel of newspapers that arrives from Romania and see that nothing good or auspicious is being done."[1] His trips to Romania often left him with contradictory impressions. "With what inexpressible longing for my country I had set out!" he writes in March 1892, and yet contact with his country disillusions him: "I came with an image of Romania that was perhaps over-idealized." It is certain that homesickness and distance kindled his imagination. He dreamed of winter landscapes, sleighs and snow, but then there occurred—symbolically speaking—"a new operation of destruction; the mud demolishes the image of snow."

Again in 1897 he writes to Maiorescu:

> Here I am back again under my own roof, at my usual table where everything around me knows me: books, paper, portraits and thoughts. Here my mind settles into its judgment seat; the depths of my nature grow ever clearer, after three months spent in hotels, irritated, discontented and yet happy that at the rise of the curtain, the atmosphere was Romanian. This contradictory state of mind, of unbridled longing for my country's soil and of a certain contempt for its people, has its explanation, on the one hand in the real beauty and richness of nature, and on the other in the psychological conditions of our so-called cultured class. I think that nowhere is it more difficult to be a superior human being and nowhere is it easier to seem to be something

than in Romania. This is for me the surest sign that our civilisation is of recent date. As with all nations new to culture, the Romanian character conceals an inner core of artlessness and a curious scepticism with a rather vulgar irony, "bon enfant" and without staying power, "spinach" (as they call it) in the full sense of the word. The core of artlessness is very successfully exploited by charlatans and is the basis of false reputations in politics, literature, and everything else. The scepticism and irony, on the other hand, seem to aim at undermining everything serious. To note a detail, for example, we lack one class of people (the most interesting as public), those who are so well denoted in Italian by the word *bongustai*. The *bongustai* [refined] can be found in all social classes, but particularly among those who have no work because their livelihood is assured by a small income; they live to bring up their children, they are cultured, they read everything, they are interested in everything and—this is important—they do not publish their opinions in the papers. In our country such people are at once of no account. "X. Yes, he's intelligent, but he's of no account." Women, in particular, are deficient in this way. "Mrs. X, yes, she's all right, but a bit of a goose." It seems that, in fact, being few in number in proportion to the land, our consciousness that we must each have some work of our own, does not allow us to be tolerant of those who have none. Anyhow, this is a problem of economics: the formation of a bourgeoisie which would in time become cultured.[2]

His preoccupation with the evolution of the Romanian world is evident at every step during those years. The problem of the modernization of Romania by means of an organic evolution or by adopting—and this was equivalent to a revolution—certain structures of foreign inspiration on top of an old agrarian society had been troubling people's minds for a generation. Zamfirescu returns to this problem in a letter to Maiorescu. "On the basis of a social-political idea of the late Brătianu an almost new world has been erected, the world of *arendaşi*. Though at the start they were barefoot and consequently Liberals, they gradually became Conservatives as their wealth increased." [3] Here we have an avowal of Zamfirescu's aversion to the new bourgeoisie, promoted by the Liberal party, and to their influence on the political habits of Romanian society. Such an attitude could not but be received with approval by Titu Maiorescu, the leader of *Junimea*.

The whole ideology of *Junimea*, based on the distinction between form and content, expressed this concern. When Maiorescu had branded "forms without content," [4] he had also been referring to the political and social institutions borrowed from the West and imposed on a traditional society unprepared for such reforms. Eminescu in his political articles in *Timpul* (Time) had vigorously maintained the same point of view, that is to say he had demanded reforms which

would respect tradition and national spirit. But the Liberals, the "Reds," as they were called, once in power were in a hurry to create a state with democratic institutions and a Western-type bourgeoisie in a country which was "eminently agricultural." This encouraged the rapid rise of an ambitious class bent on social climbing and self-enrichment and brought about the toleration of political maneuvering unrestrained by moral considerations. These were the *arendaşi*, or middlemen, of all sorts who were denounced by conservative and nationalist minds.

From the start of his career Zamfirescu had adhered body and soul to the ideology of *Junimea*. For him *Junimea* represented the "scientifically conservative" party, that is to say the one which believed that any measure in conformity with a thing's *raison d'être* is a conservative measure. This form of conservatism or enlightened reformism tallied with his own mind and temperament. In the midst of swift transformations the specific character of the Romanian world and its values anchored in tradition must be rescued.

Zamfirescu, like Nicolae Filimon a generation earlier, considered that a certain type of upstart (*ciocoi*) was a typical phenomenon of the Romanian world in the course of modernization. In his eyes the situation of the peasants at the end of the nineteenth century, when there was the beginning of the peasant revolts which culminated in the year 1907, had its origin in the emergence of this new class of exploiting middlemen. Zamfirescu denounced these "half-educated men" of whom "some think that they know the peasant, others that they do not, because they want to forget their own starting point," in other words a world "at the base of which there is an atavistic absence of civilization" and proposed to unmask them: "I shall judge these miserable *arendaşi* who, having grown rich, become political factors, false in the first and second generation." [5]

Being neither a sociologist nor a historian, Zamfirescu took part in the great debate on his epoch through the language of literature. "I consider that Romanian society has never presented greater interest from the literary point of view" he wrote in 1891.[6] The reflections and meditations which he recorded in his correspondence, prefaces and critical prose, took the path of the novel. In other words he imagined and wrote histories which illustrate on the artistic side the vision which he had of Romanian society.

The Comăneşteanu cycle consists of five volumes written between 1891 and 1907, while he was *en poste* at Rome, Athens, Brussels, and Rome again. The first three, *Viaţa la ţară*, *Tănase Scatiu*, and *În război*, form a series written between 1891 and 1899, three parts of a

single triptych, as the novelist several times asserted. *Îndreptări* and *Anna* stand apart from the other three and were to be completed by a third novel, *Romanul Deduleştilor* (The Dedulescus), of which only one chapter was written. The first three of the whole cycle, the most important ones, are social novels, *În război* being a war novel as well. The last two works are centered on subjects with a national substratum.

I *The Theme*

Of *Viaţa la ţară*, written at Brussels in 1892–93 and published in *Convorbiri literare* in 1894, Zamfirescu's correspondence with Titu Maiorescu in particular, but also with other members of *Junimea*, records the stages of its gestation and creation. It is as if we had a window open on to the laboratory of a novelist, which is a rare thing in Romanian literature. A letter of May 1892 speaks of an "everlasting restlessness" which possesses him. "I glimpse fragments of a novel, together with long stretches of flat country, but all as it were wrapped in a Bărăgan mist." It is the very image to foreshadow *Viaţa la ţară*. In October of the same year, the novelist was living in retirement with few external contacts. "Instead, a deal of spiritual serenity, all sorts of dreams and drowsy plans, projects for novels whose canvas is spread out in its entirety." During the winter of 1892–93 he began to write "with real pleasure" the continuation of a "fragment of a novel begun long ago."

A year later, in January 1893, the writer announced to Maiorescu from Brussels the dispatch of the first part of *Viaţa la ţară* to *Convorbiri literare*. He explained that for a year and a half he had been living in the imaginary world of his novels "in such an atmosphere of friendship that now I am sorry to leave it." The novel was finished and sent in its entirety to *Convorbiri literare* in June 1894. An exchange of letters with the editorial secretary, Iacob Negruzzi, gave him the opportunity to speak about his conception of the novel and its characters and of the reason why he had chosen such a subject: "My desire to give an exact report of our Romanian nature, both in the peasant and in his surroundings." Thus Zamfirescu conceived the project of painting the picture of a society representative of the Romanian character. The social milieu most representative of Romanian tradition could only be that of the native boyars and the peasantry, the two "historic factors of the real Romania until the threshold of the twentieth century." Zamfirescu proposed to give "a likeness of their times," whoever they may have been, "good or bad." Specimens from the

world of the petty and medium boyars also appeared in the short stories of 1888, but they were studied from a different point of view, that of their individual cases. A character like Alecu Zăgănescu, a petty boyar in financial straits, is above all a man without a purpose. In *Viaţa la ţară* Zamfirescu returns to the fundamental reality of Romania, the rural milieu in which generations of Romanians throughout the social scale from peasant to boyar have lived.

Predecessors of the characters in the novel are spread through the previous stories as well as in the previous unsuccessful novels, half romantic, half realist, *In faţa vieţii* (In Face of Life) and, in particular, *Lume noua, lume veche* (Old World, New World), 1891, published in *Convorbiri literare*, in which *ciocoi* figure alongside the pure and good. In fact, all that he had written before was a sort of preparation for *Viaţa la ţară*. The novel was to have been called *Pe arătură* (On the Ploughland), putting a deliberate stress on the peasant aspect. By changing the title to *Viaţa la ţară*, the author gave it an overall content. The Comăneşteanu family represent the class of medium boyars, the gentry, with an attachment to the land. Tănase Scatiu is the *arendaş*, sprung from the ranks of peasants, who composed 80 percent of the population of Romania at the time. All these people live *la ţară*. The word *ţară* comes from the Latin *terra* and has two main senses in Romanian: (1) that of geographical territory, "country"; (2) that of "countryside," that is, the rural milieu (for example, *un om de la ţară*, "a countryman, peasant," *viaţa la ţară*, "country life," *vorbeşte ca la ţară*, "he talks in a country way"). If we add the third sense, that of "Romania" as found in the commonly used expressions: *ce mai veşti din ţară* "what news from Romania?"; *s-a întors din ţară*, "he has returned from Romania"; *tot cu gîndul la ţară*, "always thinking of Romania," we see that a single word expresses three essential notions: "country," "countryside," and "native land." This is essential for the understanding of the Romanian reality which lies behind the novel *Viaţa la ţară*.

Viaţa la ţară appeared in *Convorbiri literare* from July 1894 to May 1895, and in book form in its first edition in August 1898. From the start it was regarded by contemporary critics as the greatest Romanian novel before 1900, bracketed together with Filimon's *Ciocoii vechi şi noi*, which had appeared thirty years earlier.

II *Analysis of the Characters*

The scenes of which the work is composed mostly take place in 1867–68, in a world in which the landowners and peasants of Romania

are still living in accordance with an ancestral "purpose" and an "order" established by old customs and traditions. The places are imaginary, but inspired by real landscapes. They are situated somewhere in the county of Ialomiţa, in the fertile plain between the Danube and the Carpathians, which is called the Bărăgan. Zamfirescu certainly recalled the estate where he used to spend his holidays in the county of Rîmnicul Sărat. Several neighboring estates linked with the villages of Ciulniţei and Comăneşti belong to landowners who live almost the whole year in the country. They are families from the middle rank of boyars who also have a house in Bucharest, where they spend the winter, if they do not go abroad after the custom of the post-1848 generations, who had discovered the charm of travel in the West.

The estate of Ciulniţei belongs to the boyar Dinu Murguleţ. Not far off at Comăneşti lives the Comăneşteanu family, that is to say Saşa Comăneşteanu with her sisters and her brother. Alongside Ciulniţei is the property of Matei Damian, the nephew of the boyar Murguleţ. Farther off, near the small town of Baltă but still within visiting distance, is the house and land of Tănase Scatiu.

Dinu Murguleţ is a landowner of the 1860s. His father had the title of *căminar*, that is to say he had occupied a middle rung on the ladder which gave him the right to a local boyar's rank. In old Romania there was no aristocracy in the Western sense. In the old administrative system of Wallachia and Moldavia access to the rank of boyar was bound up with the office that a man held in the prince's administration. There were three categories of boyars. Great boyars (Class I) held offices equivalent to those of ministers. Class III consisted of petty boyars. A *căminar*, whose duty was to collect certain taxes, came into Class II. Romanian society was just in the transitional stage where boyars of the old type and those of the new lived side by side, the former being often the fathers of the latter. Romanian literature after 1848 is full of examples of the symbiosis of old-fashioned elders with the youth influenced by the West. Before Zamfirescu, stories had been written on this theme by Vasile Alecsandri, Constantin Negruzzi, and Nicu Gane. After him, Brătescu-Voineşti wrote in the same spirit.

Dinu Murguleţ with his traditionalist ideas, is one of the conservative boyars. Many features of Murguleţ were until recent times to be found in the nature of the Romanian landowner. Murguleţ is tied to the land by every fiber of his being: "Look at this land . . . here we were born, I and your mother and our parents' parents. . . . " For him the supreme duty is: "Stay here, on this land!" His philosophy of

life is inherited from his forebears; it is common sense and the patriarchal spirit. His intelligence is practical, directed toward the work of husbanding his estate, the cultivation of the land, obedience to the imperatives of such a life: "You must become like us, a man of necessity. Clothe yourself for sun and temper your soul in hardships so that you may know to value the good things of life." Happiness consists in living simply without the "fads" acquired abroad, he tells his nephew Matei Damian, when Damian returns from Paris. He advises him to settle in the country:

> And you will be happy, take my word for it. You won't have your Paris cafés with their iced coffee, or orange-trees as in "la bella Italia," but you will be a whole man . . . no one will lead you up the garden path.

Dinu Murguleţ is one of those old-fashioned men who lived in a cultural universe close to that of the peasants. The peasants feel this and knowing it they actually call him "our boyar" and will support him against the upstart Scatiu. Murguleţ is typical of a whole category of people of his own and other times; by his horror of "deals" and politics and by his conception of agriculture he is the type of the old-fashioned landowner. He never dreams of making money by agriculture. In reality he is a poor administrator, and his financial difficulties, namely the money he borrows from Scatiu and cannot repay, are to have fatal consequences in the development of events.

His sister, Matei Damian's mother, old Diamandula, who has moved to his house in her old age, is like him a being of another time, one of those "simple, happy natures, which lived on devotion alone." Her brief appearance (for she dies at the start of the novel) accentuates the Old-World atmosphere of Murguleţ's house.

> Deep in a walnut bedstead with pillows against the wall was huddled the shape of a woman, and on chairs around her were relations and friends. Her head bound in the old style with a black shawl, Diamandula from time to time drew her spectacles, tied up with thread, on to her forehead, to look for the hundredth time at a letter from her son.

Her son, returning from Paris after seven years of absence, finds her room unchanged: the stove, the old walnut furniture, "the same porcelain angels under glass; the same slipper nailed to the wall, with the enamelled clock; the same carpets on the floor."

This son, the hero of the novel, is called Matei Damian. He is an intellectual, a man of the new generation. He has spent seven years in Paris, studying medicine, but his intention is to return to Romania to

look after the estate. The abandonment of their lands by landowners was a new phenomenon in Romanian society after 1848. The discovery of the city, of foreign parts, and above all, of Paris by the young men of boyar or wealthy families represented a threat, inasmuch as their estates often passed into other hands. The phenomenon interested Zamfirescu, as appears from a letter written to Iacob Negruzzi, the secretary of *Convorbiri literare*. "The Romanians of the upper classes become more vagrant every day, and their spirit more international; the ideal of every petty boyar is to let his estate as dearly as he can . . . and to establish himself abroad or at least at Bucharest." [7] In his own family the writer knew such intellectuals, uncles and cousins of his, but they had come back to Romania. His own example is eloquent. When he returned to Romania, Zamfirescu fixed his abode in the country at Focşani. In his opinion no place in the world was more beautiful than his vineyard at Faraoane!

Matei Damian is intelligent and balanced. Zamfirescu has put into him his own bent for meditation and a sort of melancholy or fatalism, inherent in the Romanian character. Matei returns to Romania undecided about the future. In fact his way of seeing things distinguishes him from old Murguleţ. Matei is of the generation of new-style boyars, back from the West with more advanced ideas. He is conscious that almost nothing has changed, like the people on the estate: the shepherd Micu and the *jitar* (the man who guards the crops against the cattle) are living just as he had left them. The conversation between him and Murgulet at the beginning of the novel, when Matei is coming back from the station with his uncle, is revealing. Matei banters with his uncle when the latter praises the position of the *jitar* which has remained exactly as it was: "That's it . . . the career of *jitar* is rather unrewarding; one doesn't get on very fast in it." But the old boyar assures him that the supreme philosophy is to be content with necessities and that the *jitar* is in fact a happy man. Matei however is rather skeptical, which makes the old man assure him that things seen from a distance do not correspond with reality. The suspicion in the uncle's subconscious that the young man may have socialist ideas emerges from the following remark: "We have all sorts of vagrants who come and fill the [peasants'] heads with nonsense," and he assures his nephew that the treatment that he reserves for such vagrants is "a flogging by the front steps and let them complain if they will." An interesting point: Matei laughs and shakes his head "incredulously." But a strange and symptomatic thing is to happen, which reveals a typical aspect of the traditionalist Romanian world. In the course of the novel Matei will be transformed in contact

with the land and will be content with the Romanian way of life. He will live, like so many Romanians of the time, tucked away in the country, and will end by resembling his uncle.

At the start of the novel Matei arrives from abroad. The description of the Bărăgan on that happy morning, the rhythmic undulations of the plain seen from the carriage in which the children and Dinu Murguleţ go to the station to fetch Matei, give the tempo and tonality of *Viaţa la ţară*. The splendid evocation of the fields gives the meaning and the beauty of life in the framework of nature.

> The lark hovered in the cool of the morning, accompanying along the Ialomiţa the carriages which were going to the station. . . . The extent of the plain unfolded itself in a summer calm beyond expression. On one side a field of maize moved its twitching leaves, giving the atmosphere a glint of green which seemed to thicken the air; on the other side, the Ialomiţa flowed gently between two low banks, leaving visible a strip of the Bărăgan with its untrodden wastes, with pastures grazed down by cattle, with a flock of sheep which showed in the distance like a white patch, and, above all, with its deceptive horizon, whose imagined line played in the burning sunshine like a mirror of water. From the pebbles of the brook the herd was climbing a slope and making its way slowly to the pasture. Here and there a solitary bull stood planted on the edge of the water with his head thrust forward, embodying in his immobility the loneliness of the place.

In the first part of *Viaţa la ţară*, composed as it is of scenes of everyday life, Matei's arrival opens up a path which we might call "the path of happiness." Matei discovers life and its setting just as he had left it. People have grown old, his mother is on her deathbed, the children have grown, but the feeling of returning to his native place, to the ancestral lands, the utter satisfaction of finding his roots again, is a feeling of profound human happiness. Shortly after Matei's arrival, Diamandula dies, surrounded by her family and at peace because she has seen her son again. Her death is in the order of things; no shock, no distress. The burial scene shows the nearness of life and death in the Romanian world: the sayings of the peasants, the heat, the *colivă* (frumenty) on which the "colored sugar tried to render the likeness of the departed woman, but was melting," the description of the country graveyard, old graves covered with grass, new graves.

Before dying Diamandula expressed her last wish, that Matei should marry Saşa Comăneşteanu. But Matei has other things to think about. He must learn to administer the estate, which had been lift in the hands of some poor relations, Nae Eftimiu and his wife, Aglaia, both typical figures from the provincial world of Romania,

well known to Zamfirescu and described in so many of his earlier stories and sketches. Nae is strikingly akin to certain incapable or indolent characters in Russian fiction—in Gogol, for example, or Goncharov. Aglaia is an intriguer with intellectual pretensions, who devours worthless novels translated from French, that "fairground literature" denounced by Zamfirescu as a menace of the age.

Matei's real apprenticeship is done alongside a woman, that very Saşa Comăneşteanu in whom his mother had seen the ideal wife for him. Saşa is the heroine of the novel and perhaps the best-known heroine of any novel in classical Romanian literature. Saşa lives at Comăneşti with two younger sisters, Victoria and Mary, and with her adolescent brother, Mihai. An orphan for several years, Saşa at the age of twenty-three or twenty-four is bringing up her sisters and brother, who in fact call her "Maman." We find that the Comăneşteanu family had played an important role in all national movements. It represents the native section of the petty or middle-rank boyars, from which were drawn the militants of 1848. We are told that Saşa's father, Costică, had been exiled in 1848, and that two elder brothers of his "had lived for a long time in banishment." One knows what an important part the generation of *paşoptişti* ("forty-eighters") played in the struggle for Romanian independence against the suzerain power Turkey and the protecting power Russia.

Saşa is the embodiment of feminine charm. Zamfirescu has distilled in her a variety of memories: his memory of Elena Simionescu-Rîmniceanu, of Eliza, of Ecaterina Munteanu, and of the women who marked his first years in Italy. But Saşa was born of the author's imagination and is an authentic creation, whoever may have been her models. In January 1893 he wrote to Maiorescu from Brussels:

> You will make the acquaintance of a certain person there [i.e. in the novel]. I have lived with her on very good terms, so good that I had almost fallen in love with her. And strangely all the other figures in my previous attempts clung like shadows to a real being, seen or glimpsed; but she has no connection with anyone. She materialised on the blank pages of her own accord.[8]

Saşa radiates an extraordinary power of attraction, although there is nothing particularly striking about her. She is an intelligent woman, her education is nothing much, her spirit tends to the practical, she has willpower and a taste for action. She is not particularly beautiful, although we are told that she has abundant hair . . . and a slender waist. Her secret lies in a grace and a discretion which veils her and gives her a mysterious charm. Eugen Lovinescu, speaking of Saşa, wrote enthusiastically: "In the whole of Romanian literature there is no soul more noble, more harmonious in its internal and external rhythm, no more complete and poetic realisation of certain positive qualities; by no means romantic, she is the expression of reality and of practical sense in life, yet of practical sense steeped in poetry." [9]

Matei finds Saşa congenial, but he does not think of marriage. Saşa on her part has loved him since childhood, but she hides her feelings so as not to put pressure on him. Matei and Saşa see one another frequently, they meet, they visit one another as neighbors. The dialogues between them when they are not talking of serious matters such as estate business or the state of the peasants, slide toward erotic feeling. Zamfirescu is very good at rendering erotic nuances. Between the woman who loves and the man who gradually discovers her charm there is a restraint and a discretion which are entwined with the simplicity and naturalness of the gentry. But beyond the *bon ton* of their behavior there emanates something inexpressible, a warmth which is in the last resort an emotion and a convincing truth. A rare quality of Duiliu Zamfirescu consists in knowing how to render the exact tone of feeling. He succeeds in making the whole delicately shaded idyll between Saşa and Matei an unforgettable love story.

In the backgammon scene, which follows the meeting at church, Matei sees Saşa with fresh eyes. Delightedly he discovers "the dexterity with which she moves" and pays her a delicate though conventional compliment:

> "You don't know how like a flower you are!" said Matei suddenly.
> "Oh dear, what a compliment, my friend!"
> "True, it would have been better if I had not spoken, but I felt it so natural! You really are like a flower. Today your clothes seem to have grown on you as the leaves do on the lily."
> She turned red with pleasure and stopped preparing the coffee, gently pushing the cup away from her. Then she bent down and looked at her dress.
> "Do you like it? It's simple, isn't it?"
> "Wonderful."

Saşa does not resist the emotion which she can no longer control. "The left hand with which she threw the dice was trembling. The cubes jumped out of the box, and Matei bent to pick them up." Her agitation is drawn with strokes in which the eye of Zamfirescu as observer of the feminine heart excels.

In the scene of their meeting at the melon grower's, Matei—now integrated into the life which will henceforth be his—discovers his feeling for Saşa. The meeting is preceded by a meditation before a

sunset over the Romanian plain, that plain dear to Zamfirescu. By chance Saşa passes that way in her carriage. Seeing Matei, she quickly gets out and without waiting to be invited, she sits gaily beside him and begins to eat slices of melon. The portrait of Saşa in that moment of happiness is drawn with the pen of an impressionist who loves women:

She sat down on the bench, raised to the tip of her nose the thick veil with which she was covered and set herself to cut small pieces of melon and to eat them. She was enchanting. Her eyes were laughing with happiness as she looked at him. Her hand, tightly gloved, pressed lightly and elegantly on the handle of the humble slicer.

On the way home, Matei declares his love to Saşa. Everything takes place with the same restraint, and at the same time with the naturalness of profound things which are bound to happen.

In the end their agreement over their views of life and also their bond with the soil are sealed by a union. In this way the union of Saşa and Matei is an example and a symbol. "They had to bind themselves once more to the soil, and bind themselves forever." To them the novel owes its bright side. It is known that the author hesitated before marrying them, probably because complete happiness in love seemed to him an impossibility. It is one facet of his idealist spirit. "We are only completely happy in the illusion of our happiness," Matei declares rather unexpectedly to Saşa, just when he is on the point of revealing his feelings for her. The contradiction between the "powerful note of idealism" (so characteristic of Zamfirescu) in Matei's soul and the plane of happiness which passes through marriage is here resolved by a happy ending, a thing rare in Zamfirescu's fiction. All his erotic literature bears the mark of that vision of the "illusion of happiness" which is symbolized by the present brought by Saşa to Matei on her return from Paris: a pencil with a crystal globe on the end, which contains Saşa's portrait.

He looked through the peep-hole of the pencil, closing one eye and with the other looking at Saşa's charming face, her elegant figure. Without realizing it he loved her there in the illusory distance of a piece of glass more than in the real world beside him, though in the real world he loved her very much. As she was there, she seemed more like the Saşa in his mind, serene and unspeakably sweet; whereas what she was here, was the real, human side of her.

To a lover of Zamfirescu's sort sadness always accompanies the fulfillment of earthly desire. Things only remain pure in the world of unreality.

Matei and Saşa are married. Matei moves to Comăneşti and takes Saşa's family name, their son being Alexandru Comăneşteanu. Thus the family of Comăneşteanu will be carried on.

The idyll between Matei and Saşa has its counterpart in the love of the two young people, Tincuţa and Mihai. Tincuţa is the daughter of Dinu Murguleţ and Coana Sofica. In *Viaţa la ţară* Tincuţa is a timid young girl, who blushes, is at the romantic age, and is dreamy and childlike at the same time. Mihai Comăneşteanu is Saşa's brother and the future hero of the 1877 war in *În război*. In *Viaţa la ţară* Mihai is a charming adolescent, sensitive, handsome, healthy, country-bred, brought up on nature and hunting. He is "the man" among his sisters and his cousin Tincuţa. Before leaving to study in Paris, Mihai says good-bye to Tincuţa. The scene takes place in a boat at a wild-duck shoot and is no doubt inspired by memories of the writer's youth. The evocation of nature, the lake at Comăneşti, the flight of birds at dawn, form an admirable accompaniment to the idyll between Mihai and Tincuţa. Mihai is proud of his skill as a shot and at the same time sad because he is going away. Tincuţa, admiring and apprehensive, sits huddled at the bottom of the boat. They make one another promises; they will write and wait for one another. Tincuţa sentimentally gives him a lock of hair. Suddenly she asks him a question which might be partly feminine coquetry, but in fact proclaims the depth of her nature: "Would you shoot me?" The boy "understood with his masculine intuition that this was a woman's quirk, to which a reply must be found. 'It depends . . . if you were a duck . . . or a wild goose, I should shoot you.' Then the girl pretends to be angry, or is indeed vexed by such a comparison. And thus the scene which had begun so serenely is troubled. Tincuţa's imagination proclaims her fantastic nature and her future unhappy lot. The vexation between the two young people passes like a cloud; youth and nature conquer. An indescribable charm is given off by the splendid description of nature, a model of its kind.

The lake at Comăneşti, teeming with fish, lost itself in a curtain of greenery, where the water seemed to cease. But really it went further on, hidden by beds of reeds and water-lilies. Here Mihai would vanish, having from childhood learned all the windings and the ways through, and now he was making his way all over in the boat, beating the backwaters, stopping at the open pools from which rose startled flocks of wild duck, cunning coots, loons,

whoopers, geese and sometimes even swans, coming from the direction of the Danube.

III *The Picture of Society*

An air of authenticity floats over these scenes of everyday life, their preoccupation with household and estate management, their lack of high drama and violent passions. In the author's mind it was a question of life in the country, and so of a multitude of nothings. Zamfirescu was well acquainted with this society and its style of life, which corresponded to a type of civilization for which he was indirectly pleading. Naturalness and simplicity are what distinguish the behavior and *savoir-vivre* of these country gentry. Their mode of manners is founded on "propriety," respect for their elders; Tincuţa and Saşa kiss the hands of their seniors. What marks the relationships of these people is their lack of pose, their informality, a thing which all foreigners noticed in old Romania. This typically Romanian life-style fitted perfectly with the patriarchal framework of country life.

Like their way of life, the country houses of these middle-rank country gentry were very simple. Saşa's room is "a peasant room all hung with long strips of homewoven linen." It is a simplicity peculiar to the patriarchal life, but it does not exclude education, culture, and manners. Saşa is what one would call a cultivated person; she talks French and is on the point of leaving to get Mihai settled in Paris. Mihai and his sisters have an English governess, Miss Sharp, who teaches them to shake hands, forbids them to eat "mamligutz" [10] and has principles inspired by *Vanity Fair*.

Between masters and peasants relations are natural and familiar, as between people who have long lived very close to one another in the same cultural universe. Here is Saşa returning home at dinnertime. Waiting for her before the door is the foreman from the threshing floor, with whom she discusses the business of the threshing-machine. After that she goes into the house and "while removing her hatpin and taking off her hat without looking in the glass," she sees Lungu "who is waiting for her crouched against the house wall and who comes into the hall with a chicken in his hand," in other words a present. His cow has damaged her crops and been impounded. Failing to persuade her to give him a chit to recover his cow, Lungu waits till the end of the meal. Then he goes into the dining room and finally obtains satisfaction. Immediately after that the mechanic of the threshing machine makes his appearance, covered with oil and drunk as usual. Saşa talks to these people directly and simply, like someone who knows them well and understands the workings of the estate.

The same familiar tone appears again in her conversation with the headman of the village and the priest, who come to discuss how to organize the reception of the procession from the convent of Agapia.[11] The Orthodox church, and therefore its priests, are part of the Romanian tradition. The scene with the Virgin brought from Agapia by the peasants to summon rain gives the quality and atmosphere of religious feeling in the Romanian countryside with a splendid description of the service held on the edge of the fields.

> With their bare heads in the sunshine, four abreast, the priests were praying, ceaselessly kneeling down and standing up again. The peasants crossed themselves with large gestures, saying from time to time "Lord, give rain"; the women remained bowed to the ground. Spindly grasshoppers bounded into the turned-up skirts of the priests' cassocks, while belated swallows shot like arrows through the ranks of people. It was a sign of fine weather. A water cart from the manor was surrounded by youths and boys who passed the jug from mouth to mouth.

The gentry had a duty to do what was needed on such occasions; hence the visit of the headman and of the priest Vasile Buză-Tăiată to Saşa. Father Vasile is a village priest, rather drunken and greedy—an old-fashioned priest with a store of proverbs which he keeps on bringing out. Invited by Saşa to sit at table, the priest is not abashed as he guzzles her plum brandy and stuffed aubergines. Clearly Zamfirescu had no soft spot for priests, though like any Romanian he was attached to the church.

Saşa administers her estate with the competence of a specialist in agronomy and an expert in social psychology. The fact that it is a woman who is shown as the example of a good administrator is significant. The necessary qualities are not found in the old boyar, Dinu Murguleţ, but in Saşa, first because she is young and therefore has more advanced ideas, and secondly just because she is a woman, a thing which is explicable in the Romanian social landscape where it is well known that in moments of crisis women have been able to rise to the occasion as well as men. Saşa explains to Matei just back from abroad how one should behave to peasants.

> The most sensible thing to do is to summon people one Sunday and tell them that you have decided to look after things yourself; that you are forgiving all debts, tearing up all contracts, cancelling all agreements; that you will make new contracts (and proper ones, as the old ways don't do anymore); that any one who has any request to make or anything to say will find you ready to talk. Then give them something to drink, and if you like, have music too. . . . And after all that, don't expect too much. The peasant will drink your wine, dance

the *horă*, not pay his debt, and when you send for him to work, he won't come.

Faced with Matei's astonishment, Saşa explains to him in lucid, realistic terms the reasons which justify the peasants' attitude. The principal one is how the peasant has been treated in the past.

Everyone from everywhere has devoured him and cheated him to the best of their ability. The *arendaş*, be he Greek, Bulgarian or Romanian, is the same everywhere. His only object is to enrich himself, as you can see from Scatiu and all the others like him. So the boyar is considered by the peasant as his natural enemy. Add the inevitable opposition of their interests: when our grain ripens, so does his, and although he has received money to come and reap at the first summons, he goes first to his own wheat. . . .

And Saşa, who is a modern mind, goes on to plead for the mechanization of agriculture, the sole remedy in view of the lack of farming labor resulting from intensified cultivation.[12]

Thus at the heart of *Viaţa la ţară* is the problem of land and peasants, a thing which Zamfirescu explained in justifying the feeling which had driven him to write the novel: "the desire to give the precise indication of what is characteristically Romanian both in the peasant and in his surroundings." [13] The land which forms a link between the local gentry and the peasants becomes an object of litigation and a cause of hatred between Scatiu and the peasants. This is because the ownership of land has a different meaning for different people. The native gentry and the peasants see in it something stable, an inherited right; indeed, the Romanian word for an estate (*moşie*) is derived from *moş* (forefather) and implies a link with the past. But the others, Tănase Scatiu and his like, regard land as a means of enrichment, a way of gaining power and wealth. This is the crucial point on which turns the social problem that enthralled Zamfirescu.

In *Viaţa la ţară* Matei Damian is the writer's spokesman in reflections on the nature of the Romanian peasant. In the melon-field scene, before the meeting with Saşa, Matei Damian meditates in face of the sunset over the Romanian plain. The harmony between nature and man's character is revealed to him together with the feeling "of gentle discouragement" in which the dominant factor is submission to fate. The very Romanian expression *O fi* (maybe) occurred to him. And the expression led him to think of the peasants' lot: how good-natured they were to accept it as it was! And Matei remembers that he intended to establish a school for them: a Tolstoyan type of action

which was what the landowning class—a class doomed by history to disappear in a generation or two—understood by social work.

The peasant's fatalism and its corollary, his nearness to nature and the cosmos, nowhere appear so perfectly rendered as in the scene between Matei and the shepherd Micu, one of the best known in Romanian literature. Matei has decided to spend the night out of doors at the threshing floor. He has lain down on a stack of straw "with his face to the sky and with Micu at his feet." Matei's meditation on the mystery of man confronted with the universe takes up a theme from those poems of Zamfirescu which smack of philosophy. The evocation of the summer night in the midst of the Bărăgan strikes a poetic note in which Zamfirescu excels: portrayal of the charm of the Romanian landscape.

But the true mirror which reflects the Romanian universe is the soul of the shepherd Micu. He loves his dog Corcoduş, described by him in simple words:

He kills the wolf with his breast-band . . . I knocked some nails into a strap . . . and put it round his neck like a horse's breast-band, so if he leaps on the wolf, he knocks him out with the nails.

Between the shepherd and surrounding nature the harmony is unconscious and profound. He is the man of the place, belonging to an ancient indigenous population, from which the Romanian people is derived: that of the shepherds in the Carpatho-Danubian area. The spiritual link between the shepherd and his dog, as well as his knowledge of the stars, is part of that archaic universe in which, in Zamfirescu's eyes, the Romanian peasant moves. There is a striking kinship between Micu—created by the novelist—and the shepherd in the folk-ballad "*Mioriţa*." Micu remains one of the best-known creations in Romanian literature. He is all the more significant a figure in that Zamfirescu repudiated the idealization of the peasant. In the scene between Matei and the shepherd, the latter behaves naturally. Although the moment is intensely poetic, Micu, like all Zamfirescu's peasants, is not idealized. The explanations which he gives of the sky and the zodiac express his sincere belief in the forces of nature. Through his mouth speaks archaic man.

The first "path" of the novel is the path of order, composed of scenes which illustrate the rules of civilized life in a typical social milieu, that of the landowners. The other is that which destroys this traditional order. It is a path dominated by a new sort of man and his

world, Tănase Scatiu, the parvenu, who has justly been compared to a sort of farmer from a Romanian Far West. Between the old masters and the new stand the peasants, who are subject on the one hand to the parental authority of the enlightened boyars and on the other to the brutal authority of the calculating exploiter, the money-grubber, namely Tănase Scatiu.

The very first scene, the visit of the young Tănase with his mother, Profira, to the boyar Dinu Murgulet, reveals the social difference between the newly rich (*ciocoii*) and their hosts. Profira is a woman of the *mahala*. *Mahala* has in this sense a peculiarly Romanian connotation. It means the world at the outskirts of the town. Originating from the Turkish word *mahala*, meaning "quarter, district," the word has taken on in Romanian a pejorative sense, the sense of "vulgar, common, with no manners." Caragiale specialized in portraying this world. So Profira is a *mahalagioaică*. Feeling unwell, she recounts her anxieties about her health, disfiguring her words in the way characteristic of the half-educated, and she is superstitious—she spits on Tincuţa to avert the evil eye. But the visit proves an important thing: the Comăneşteanus, like the Murguleţ family, have no caste spirit; their circle is open from the social point of view, a thing characteristic of Romanian society.

After the Scatius have left, Murguleţ bursts out: "Open the doors to let out the smell of vulgarity!" His impotent indignation against the impudence of the Scatius knows no bounds. Murguleţ recalls that he had seen Tănase's father tied up and beaten on the orders of his (Murguleţ's) father. Now Tănase and his mother dare to come along with a plan of marriage for his daughter, Tincuţa. Murguleţ cannot control his fury and swears that never in his life will he give his daughter "to such a cad." On the other hand his wife, Sofica, though she does not say so, does not rule out the possibility of marriage; in her eyes Tănase Scatiu's money is a considerable advantage.

In the succeeding scenes Tănase distinguishes himself by his ridiculous behavior as a parvenu imitating gentry. On his visit to Saşa the horses in his carriage give him away. At the back of the carriage he has installed a peasant dressed in clothes of his own, which make the man look grotesque. On the other hand, the horses are splendid. Saşa recognizes them as having belonged to a ruined landowner from whom Tănase bought them for nothing. His parvenu mentality shows itself when he praises the horses and mentions the price that he paid for them. Impelled by his desire to shine in conversation, Tănase relates to Saşa and Matei the way in which he bought the horses from the landowner Otopeanu, to whom he had once been *arendaş*.

Tănase took advantage of the landowner's indebtedness. "Well, that's our gentry for you; they borrow money to enjoy themselves abroad, and when it comes to paying, they're broke. . . ." He is sorry that he did not buy Otopeanu's estate when it was auctioned. "Now times have changed: 'Have you money?' you're a boyar; 'You haven't?' you may have come down from heaven—it's no good. Am I right?"

From time to time Scatiu has the impression that the boyars are laughing at him, the very people whom he and his mother malign as "stuck-up beggars, damn them!" At those moments a feeling of inferiority awakes in him and he begins to "growl." The atmosphere in the parvenu's house contrasts with that of the Comăneşteanu household. A typical scene is that in which Tănase, returning home, finds Profira drunk. The difference between the traditional manor-houses of Ciulniţei and Comăneşti and the Scatiu household is that at the latter "buildings have been put up in haste and on the cheap." Carelessness and disorder betray the character of the owner. In Tănase's house "there is a tavern smell." "In a pantry with a mud floor his mother was 'christening' the arrack"; i.e., she was adding water to it, helped by a servant. Tănase is fond of his mother, though this does not prevent their quarreling and swearing at each other. There follows the scene between mother and son, with curses ("Devil take you, you'd better have been born dead!") and with the old woman going out to the gate ("After abusing everybody, she entered the house and went to bed"). Tănase's room is full of bits, bridles, and crops, hanging from pegs in the wall, of pistols and boots, which suggest the stables and violence.

The true face of Scatiu is revealed in his relations with the peasants, whom he "flays with his interest charges and litigation." Indeed here can be seen the attitude of the *arendaş*, the foreign element. Acting in the name of the state, Scatiu undertakes a lawsuit to get hold of lands which the state is said to have lost as the result of a surveying error which figures in the land register. The peasants are summoned to judgment, but they refuse to present themselves in court because they fear that they will be judged by the "same boyars," namely their new masters of the Scatiu type.

In the course of a scene which announces the coming storm, the novel makes a curious incursion into the socialist ideas which circulated at that time. At the start of the novel, Dinu Murguleţ had remarked that "we have all sorts of vagabonds who come to fill their heads with nonsense, but so far on my estate no one listens to them. . . ." In the presence of Scatiu, the old peasant Stoica says: "The man who can't read is in a poor way; but this is what they say,

that orders have come from Russia that land should be shared with us." Scatiu is furious, but controls himself: ' "Would you share your oxen with him, eh? . . . Give him two oxen; he has none and you have four, eh?" But the old man answers: "Well, if we are to give Lefter two, sir, I've only four, but you have a whole herd; *you* give the poor fellow some." '

The scene between Scatiu and the peasants is revealing. It shows that relations of a new type have been established between them, reminiscent of class antagonism. Such relations are in contrast to the human and parental—today we should say "paternalist"—relations between the landowners of Ciulniţei and Comăneşti and their peasants. By exploiting the peasants the *arendaş* creates a tension which can lead to drama, and that is in fact what happens. With his characteristic energy and ambition Scatiu is determined to win the lawsuit against the peasants. He has all the cards in his hand: the headman of the village is his man—"he costs me a thousand lei a year"; the innkeeper, a former horse-thief, is his godson. Scatiu takes measures in view of an "inspection on the spot by the court"—that is, the arrival of the chairman of the court and his deputy. The figures of the magistrates, the deputy in his "Frenchified overcoat," bear a great resemblance to the young Zamfirescu, deputy at irşova. By the subterfuge engineered by Scatiu the magistrates are obliged to dine with him, and afterwards drive in his carriage to the scene of the inquiry. The whole village is gathered at the place in question. Here we have a great scene in movement, with the mass of mutinous peasants on one side, and Scatiu on horseback on the other. Violence breaks out when Scatiu charges the peasants who are blocking the path of the carriage, striking out left and right with his crop. The peasants reply by cudgel blows, but

> the horse moved with extraordinary dexterity: drew back several paces, leapt to one side and the other, and wheeled between the men so rapidly that no one could lay hands on it. But the crop cracked right and left and broke the skin of anyone it touched. Scatiu sat crouching, his fur hat down over his eyes, the reins tight in his left hand, firm in his seat as a devil. . . .

The peasants' hatred of Scatiu spills over on the terrified magistrates in the carriage, who are saved by the arrival of Matei Damian. Scatiu, who has received a cudgel blow on his head, will have his revenge. There follows Scatiu's vengeance on the peasants, who are accused of rebelling against the authorities. Murguleţ and Damian learn of Scatiu's machinations and go to his house, where they see with their

own eyes the tortures inflicted on the peasants by the gendarmes. Matei is indignant. To the policeman who is interrogating the so-called rebels he explodes: "Who am I? You are right to ask me. I am a fool who has left the civilized world to come and see such brutality." But Dinu Murguleţ, although he knew "what sort of trial it would be," could not countenance rebellion against the forces of order.

Matei's indignation recalls that of Duiliu Zamfirescu. In fact these scenes were inspired by his own experiences. A similar peasant revolt had occurred in 1883 in the county of Prahova. At that time Zamfirescu was an editor of *România liberă*, the official organ of *Junimea*. As such he had been sent to the scene of action as the paper's press correspondent. The peasants' revolt against a local Scatiu had ended in a drama. The peasants had murdered the *arendaş*. The event had caused a sensation. The columns of *România liberă* under Zamfirescu's signature "Don Padil" had related in detail the interrogation of the tortured peasants and reported the lawsuit which had followed. The affair had fascinated the young reporter. Public opinion had been on the side of the peasants. As for Zamfirescu the interest which he showed in the fate of the peasants never left him. All his writing and especially the Comăneşteanu cycle prove his preoccupation and the fact that he always took the side of the peasants. It is the form which democratic feeling took in this enlightened conservative, who was a disciple and admirer of Tolstoy.

IV *Synthesis*

In *Viaţa la ţară* Zamfirescu succeeds in rendering the world of tradition because of the right feeling which is at the heart of his evocation of it. In the sense in which Michelet conceived history, that is through the prism of the historian's objective sensibility, Zamfirescu came to know in the provinces and in his surroundings this way of life, which to his mind was an authentically Romanian form of civilization. The patriarchal world produced a style in relations between people that sprang from a coexistence based on the principle of respect for hierarchy. The spirit that united them was more one of "community" than of "society," and one thinks of the Russian novel and certain scenes in Turgenev or in Tolstoy himself. It is known how much Zamfirescu appreciated the Russian novelists, whom he kept on the first shelf of his bookcase. Thus in the world of the Comăneşteanus there still prevails the old conception of authority combined with liberalism and taste for culture which distinguished a certain Rumanian society at the end of the nineteenth century.

Saşa Comăneşteanu personifies this universe of tradition and its chances of survival, marrying Matei Damian and giving birth to Alexandru Comăneşteanu, while her brother Mihai becomes a hero of the 1877 war. Saşa's duty is to carry on the tradition and at the same time to show a new spirit of realism in adaptation to existence.

> The ferment abroad will penetrate our country too and will determine the evolution of future Romania towards its goal in accordance to new laws; but this evolution will take place with our consent, will be conscious and, above all, will be national.[14]

The world of tradition was threatened by new times. Zamfirescu felt that the point of equilibrium was threatened: new forces were intervening which could not be stemmed—the forces of history. These were not the peasants, but the new bourgeoisie, in a world without a bourgeois tradition, the new class embodied in the figure of Tănase Scatiu, into which Zamfirescu put all his hatred of arrivists.

V *Composition and Style*

Viaţa la ţară appeared in *Convorbiri literare* from July 1894 to May 1895. The first edition in book form was issued in August 1898; five editions followed up to the death of Zamfirescu in 1922. In his preface to the first edition, Zamfirescu explains to his readers that in *Viaţa la ţară* he has deliberately abandoned plot, i.e., action in the sense of the novel of analysis and action. The reason which he gives is that what he wanted to show, namely the essence of country life in a patriarchal society, excluded dramatic intensity. There follows a series of examples taken from Shakespeare, in whom, he asserts, "there is not a single character taken from the peasants of the Scottish Highlands." Rather rash generalizations of this sort on a basis of race and society were Zamfirescu's weakness; but often the artist in him contradicted the theorist. In any case *Viaţa la ţară* is certainly not a novel built around a plot with a preparation, a culmination and a denouement.

The work, composed of scenes, follows a course open at both ends. The composition of the scenes, a horizontal composition in the technique of fresco, corresponds to the framework of nature. Each one opens on the boundless horizon of the Romanian plain: the expanse of the Bărăgan, the lake at Comăneşti which Mihai explores in his boat, the starry night sky. The unfolding of the scenes is leisurely as the passing of the days in the country, its rhythm provided by everyday

happenings. The rhythm is intensified in the powerful scenes where the peasant masses rise up against Scatiu. The men are impelled by forces which arise from the same earth as they themselves. The peasants in these scenes are treated in accordance with Zamfirescu's theory that they are only interesting as a group and not as subjects of individual analysis. Similarly Zamfirescu considers that the only passion that can move the peasant is the passion of possessing land of his own, and not idyllic sentiments of the Sămănătorist type. Rebreanu's peasant novel *Ion* has confirmed this sweeping judgment of Zamfirescu. Nevertheless Zamfirescu created the shepherd Micu, one of the best-loved figures in Romanian literature. True, he created him more from the poetic and metaphysical point of view, but the authenticity of Micu cannot be challenged. What is more, Micu was to have figured in a third novel, in which Mihai Comăneşteanu would have been presented as a poet living in the country. This project was abandoned and the subject replaced by the novel *În războí*, but the fact is significant.

In *Viaţa la ţară* an intense atmosphere of country charm envelops the characters. Psychological observation is concentrated on the essence of the chief characters. They are treated in the classical manner as illustrations of categories: Scatiu the parvenu, who is also a man of will power; Matei the balanced man of action; Tincuţa the pure being, fated to be a victim; Murguleţ the man disarmed in face of life; Saşa the woman who preserves tradition and filial piety. Some of the secondary characters (Mihai, Tincuţa, even Tănase Scatiu and the shepherd Micu) or tertiary ones (the peasant woman Floarea, the moneylender, the bailiff, Aglaia, the innkeeper, etc.) make up the charm of this type of authentically realistic novel. Some of them recur in the later novels, others disappear. In *Viaţa la ţară* the only story taken to its conclusion is the love and marriage of Saşa and Matei. The other destinies remain open as in the modern novel.

Zamfirescu works with the fine eye of the observer. The art of the genuine detail fixes the gesture and the moment as with a pencil stroke. In the very first scene, after Tănase Scatiu's visit, Dinu Murguleţ

> sat down and went on smoking his cigarette after it had gone out, his mind darting to his nephew Damian, who did not return from abroad; to his sister Diamandula, Damian's mother, who only lived by the power of her son's image; to one thing and another, until a kitten which had crept under his chair, drew his attention by the adroitness with which it played with the feather from Tănase Scatiu's cigarette-holder.

The rightness of tone in speech and gestures gives life and authenticity to the characters. Their language fits naturally with their age, social status, and breeding. Thus this "fragrant glorification of country life," to use Lovinescu's words, is at the same time a chronicle of a society and an age.

Viaţa la ţară appeared to the *Junimea* critics Mihai Dragomirescu, Dimitrie Evolceanu, and I. A. Rădulescu Pogoneanu as the best Romanian novel to date, or at any rate since N. Filimon's *Ciocoii vechi şi noi*. Maiorescu imparted the verdict to Zamfirescu in a letter of 20 May 1895. Some months earlier he had sent him his own impressions: "I like it. The impression of 'in the country in Romania' is received by the reader fully and beautifully." [15] In the letter of 20 May 1895 his appreciation is more subtly shaded: "the novel has delicate sections of heightened interest and beautiful description which makes it—in these sections—equal to good Western novels." [16] Maiorescu's reservations were directed at the unresolved destinies of the secondary characters, as he put it in terms of his classical viewpoint. It is curious to note that except for the circle of *Junimea* and for Sanielevici (a critic who later attacked Zamfirescu) the significance of *Viaţa la ţară* was not at first appreciated by the public at its true value. Clearly this was due to its publication in magazine form and to Zamfirescu's distance from Romania. Mihai Dragomirescu himself did not at once realize that Zamfirescu had produced his major work in the first volume of the Comăneşteanu cycle. In addition, the domination of the Sămănatorists began to be felt. N. Iorga was to admit later that *Viaţa la ţară* did not at first rouse the interest which it later came to enjoy. The first person who analyzed the Comăneşteanu cycle in depth and established the importance of *Viaţa la ţară* was Eugen Lovinescu; he did so in a brilliant study in 1911 (see p. 150).

CHAPTER 3

Novels, II: Tănase Scatiu; În război; Îndreptări; Anna

THE next part of the Comăneşteanu cycle, presented as a separate novel, really continues *Viaţa la ţară*. The scenes now take place in a provincial town, a typical subprefecture, a market town with Jewish "bankers" (moneylenders), etc., but the rural world is close by. The narrative is dominated by the figure of Tănase Scatiu and relates a climax in the parvenu's career and the violent end ordained for him in the course of things.

When the story begins, Scatiu has arrived. He has grown rich as was to be expected, and has launched out into politics. He has been a deputy in two legislatures and has now been elected for a third time with the new government. Always on the majority side, he talks of ministers as though he were their closest friend; he addresses everyone in the most familiar way in his imaginary conversations with those in power; he recounts how he urged "that ass" of a general to move the last regiment from Slobozia—and the "ass" obliged him; he uses words which he cannot pronounce; he confuses "the national budget" with "customs policy" and "the millions for fortification" and "state socialism" in an impossible phraseology from which only one thing can be understood: that life in Romania is no longer tolerable since the peasants have begun to challenge the boyars with "claims."

Scatiu is now a political figure, a provincial deputy. He has also risen in the social scale by his marriage with Tincuţa Murguleţ and his consequent relationship with the Comăneşteanus. The old boyar Murguleţ has ended by giving his daughter to Scatiu. He has left his estate to Tincuţa as her dowry, reserving the life-interest for himself, and in a moment of weakness has installed himself in the house of his son-in-law. Murguleţ is now old, confined to his room by rheumatism and "eaten up with pain, miseries and hatred." The old man knows that Scatiu has long been "waiting to get his hands on the estate." He is afraid of Scatiu and at the same time hates him.

He felt the need to mock him, to insult him, to tell him that he was a boor and a lout, however much he might be a deputy. At the thought that Scatiu had become master of his estate, he felt like shouting, like using his gun. But he did not shout, nor did he shoot anybody. He chewed his bit and contented himself with venting his wrath on Tincuţa.

Tincuţa had let herself be tempted into marriage with Tănase by her girlish caprices and dreams of "rich dresses to outshine all other women, a large house, two pianos, foreign magazines, a greenhouse of flowers." Now Tincuţa is unhappy; she realizes that she has made an irreparable mistake. "All her moonstruck illusions before marriage were scattered like clouds before the wind. Their place was taken by a placid, monotonous provincial existence." The romantic dreams of her girlhood have been channeled into a rediscovered and now hopeless love for Mihai. Mihai has not forgotten her, but life keeps them apart. He now lives in Bucharest, where he has a promising job with the Minister of Internal Affairs. He is young, handsome, surrounded by women, spends recklessly and borrows money at colossal rates of interest, and behaves like someone born with a silver spoon in his mouth as often happens in the world of young boyars. The scenes between Tincuţa and Mihai are characterized by her highly emotional behaviour.

It is strange that Zamfirescu himself was conscious of their sentimentality. He wrote to Maiorescu when he sent him the manuscript: "There are a few pages of sickly sentimentality which you probably won't like. But what can one do with the nature of man? The rest, I think, will pass." [1]

Tincuţa's life with Scatiu is a hell depicted with the most pitiless realism. By the force of things Tănase's boorishness is exercised in the first instance on her. In their private life, at table, in the bedroom, he is vulgar and sadistic to Tincuţa. It is a sort of unconscious sadism, due to his feeling of class inferiority in regard to her, that drives him to torment her.

In reality Scatiu is proud to be related to the Comăneşteanus. In this vulgarian's heart the mixture of sincere feeling and envy is inextricable. Tincuţa, consumed by an impossible love and humiliated by Scatiu's insults to Mihai, realizes that she is in an impasse from which only death can rescue her. She does her best to contract lung trouble and so dies in the depth of winter. The theme of burial recurs, this time in the different context of the town. At the funeral Scatiu laments, partly for show, partly from bitterness, and yet, like Profira, drinks arrack in secret.

The spotlights are fully turned on Tănase. All his facets are lit up one after the other. Worthy of note are the scenes of his daily life; his early rising:

He passed into his office where the fire and the lamp had been alight since before daybreak and began to walk up and down until his man brought his tea. Then with a bunch of keys which weighed pounds he opened the safe and took out a bottle of rum, a tin of tobacco and a bundle of feathers. From the bottle of rum he poured into his glass of tea as much as it could hold and then raised it to his mouth, gurgling in his haste as Profira used to do when she tasted people's arrack.

Then his negotiations with his "clients," his arranging of money transactions, his usury; Tincuţa's visit to the Jewish banker to stop the blank I.O.U. when she discovers to her surprise that nearly everyone in the town owes Tănase money. Particularly good is the portrait of the Jewish moneylender with his speech and accent; Zamfirescu depicts his humane traits with sympathy. In the somber drama which is being enacted, the Jew is one of the only bright figures. The fact is that Tănase "was a tyrant in his everyday life at home," a tyrant to his wife, his father-in-law, his subordinates, and his servants—and of course to the peasants on the estate near the town. Similarly "in his provincial circle he was a political tyrant." By his brutal vitality Tănase creates around him a climate of fear which generates increasing tension. In *Tănase Scatiu* there is no "path of happiness"; everything is somber, like the winter snow and mud in which the action unfolds. Oaths, blows, and drunkenness betoken Scatiu's presence. Indeed *Tănase Scatiu* is a tale of violence; the characters are caught in a moment of paroxysm and nothing can halt the drama's onward movement.

At the center of the action is the visit of inspection by the Minister of the Interior. Politics is inseparable from the career of a man like Scatiu. The upstart knows only two paths: money and politics. Nicolae Filimon in his *Ciocoii vechi şi noi* had dwelt on the same phenomenon a quarter of a century earlier. Zamfirescu, holding a mirror to a certain society of his time in the scenes of Scatiu's political life, illustrates what many have deplored before and after him: the plague of Romanian life, namely politics as a means of arriving in the hands of a person without moral scruples or culture, in fact of a primitive like Tănase Scatiu. "Don't you see, man, that everyone plays politics and that all these people who control our politics are 'dealers'?" says Dinu Murguleţ to Matei Damian.

The minister's visit renders at a different pitch the theme of the magistrate's inspection of *Viaţa la ţară*. What is revealed is not only the figure of Scatiu but also that of the political world in a small provincial town of the past, the world of intrigues, parties, political combinations.

The preparations for the minister's visit to the town recalls the period in which the young Zamfirescu lived at Tîrgovişte or even at Focşani.

The mayor of the town went from shop to shop, as at election time, asking people to turn up at the station one and all. The tradesmen were asked to clean the streets, each to the middle, so that the "municipal services" could then take away the dirt. Some smiled when they heard this pompous description, because the "services" in question consisted of two leaky little carts which dirtied the streets rather than cleaned them. Measures were taken to fill with gravel all the potholes on the minister's route; it was decided which carriage was to bring him from the station, and inevitably the chosen equipage was that of Mr. Sotirescu [i.e., Scatiu, who was in fact called Sotirescu], an antiquated hen-coop bought at an auction and now in view of the event handed over to the coachman Ferenz.

The instructions given to the citizens, the discussions between the local authorities to settle the protocol (Who will ride in the carriage with the minister? The prefect or the mayor? Where will he be received and entertained?) are scenes which only Caragiale could rival. The honor of reception falls on Tănase Scatiu, caught once more in the spotlight by the novelist.

Scatiu is driven out of his mind by the minister's visit. "Must you, just now when the minister is coming?" These are the words with which he greets everyone who, in his view, bothers him. Confusion reigns in Scatiu's house, where Tincuţa lies ill in her room. Scatiu directs his servants like a peasant giving orders to farm-workers. Once more it is Tincuţa who saves the situation, rescuing Scatiu from the absurdity of engaging another footman with more "style," but who does not know his job.

The description of the minister's arrival at the station with Caragialesque pomp renders the atmosphere as it could only be rendered by a man familiar with the administrative milieu. The station is decked for the reception; the notables and the ordinary people are present. There follows the major's speech and the start of the procession amidst a fearful hullabaloo. Scatiu's carriage has been allotted the honorable task of taking the minister on his tour of inspection to the prefecture, the town hall, the hospital, and the prison. But among the horses harnessed to the carriage is a stallion named Fogaş, a vicious horse which only obeys its gypsy coachman, old Stoica, "a robber's cub from the Bărăgan," whereas Scatiu has wished to put a more presentable coachman on the box. Stoica is summoned to save the situation, for the minister has been unable to get into the carriage because of Fogaş's prancings. Scatiu is cut to the heart because he feels himself ridiculous. "The pride of a man ridiculous from birth, who sometimes realizes that he is ridiculous, is more formidable than another's," says Tincuţa of her husband. Returning home, Scatiu awaits the minister and his entire suite. When he sees the carriage returning empty, for the minister had eventually asked for a cab, Scatiu is maddened with rage, draws his pistol, and shoots the horse in question, then deals out a robber's beating to the coachman Stoica. After discharging his fury by this insane exploit, Tănase "feels better as if he had taken off a coat that was too tight."

The real entertainment at Tănase's begins after the minister has gone off to bed and takes the form of a *chef*. The notion of *chef* is related to the Russian idea of entertainment, with the addition of the typical Balkan atmosphere of the *mahala*. Tănase enjoys himself with the same "violent and lusty life force" with which he does everything. But it is not only Tănase who enjoys himself in that way. The other local notables let themselves go: the inspector of schools, the archpriest, the colonel, the mayor, and all get dead drunk, sing, and at the height of the *chef* begin to dance. When he got into the mood of the *chef*, Tănase "took off his frock coat, removed his boots, put his hands on his hips and began. . . . The others formed a ring round him, watching him pound the floor, now on his toes, now drumming his heels on the boards, twisting his ankles now outwards, now inwards, sinking to his knees, leaping up high, as if the Devil had got into him." Tănase's dance is, in fact, analogous to his personality and the evolution of his world; it is a peasant dance which has become a dance of the *mahala*.

After Tincuţa's death, Scatiu and old Murguleţ are left face to face. The old man knows that the peasants at Ciulniţei have handed a petition to the minister when he was on his inspection in which they complained of Scatiu and asked for the return of "our boyar," i.e., of Murguleţ. For the story had gone around among the men that Scatiu wanted to put him "under care" as not accountable for his actions. Then, under the pressure of despair, unexpected courage awakes in him. By a subterfuge the old man succeeds in eluding Scatiu's watchfulness and escaping in a sleigh in the depth of winter, back to Ciulniţei. Here on his estate the drama reaches its climax.

The relations between Scatiu and the peasants were so strained that the murder of the wretch was inevitable. Their action takes on the aspect of a revenge in the ancient sense. The accumulation of Scatiu's violent acts explains the horror of his death. It is the great scene of the unleashing of the peasants' fury, which roused the admiration of George Călinescu, the least sympathetic of Zamfirescu's critics. Tănase comes to the estate on the track of Murguleţ. Peasants are standing around in groups because they have heard that the old boyar has arrived. Tănase sets eyes on Murguleţ, who refuses to return to town. In contact with his own land and peasants, Murguleţ resists his threats. Then Tănase orders the old boyar to be bound with a rope over his coat and lifted on to the sleigh. Tănase with his gun in his hand sets the sleigh in motion, but the groups of peasants, gathering like clouds, halt it in the open country.

> What happened then, no one could tell. In a moment they tore him to pieces, without noise and without cries. The judicial enquiry found in his battered brains stones, nails, a torn handkerchief, which the fury of the people had brought like a flood.

Dinu Murguleţ is left on the land which had been so dear to him and in which he believes that he "will find, like those of old, immortality, reward and punishment."

The figure of Tănase Scatiu stands out from the whole of Zamfirescu's literary creation. In its expressionist treatment one can feel his repulsion and his condemnation of a man whom he sensed to be an evil influence on Romanian society. The narrative brings out the true dimensions of the character, this local tyrant, who is terrible to those whom he has in his power. To the powerful Scatiu becomes once more what he really is: a mediocrity, a man with no vision. This is what strikes one in Tănase's personality—that mediocrity is his personal characteristic. Tănase is not merely unscrupulous; it is his moral baseness which makes him twice as deadly.

In Caragiale's plays and tales the same society from which Tănase Scatiu emerged bustles and gesticulates. We witness the Romanian comedy which is called "the *mahala* in power." But whereas their moral nullity arouses in Caragiale laughter and derision, in Duiliu Zamfirescu it rouses repulsion and condemnation—in other words, a moral reaction.

When Titu Maiorescu received the manuscript he immediately replied to Zamfirescu, communicating his feeling, which was the unanimous feeling of the Junimists:

> How typical of some people in our country is Scatiu! "Mean and boastful at the same time"—that's it, and not only among "boors." . . . We are a country of mixtures. The pressure of hard times in the past seems to have produced in our spiritual chemistry combinations of elements which in the less intense atmosphere of Western culture prove incompatible.[2]

An excellent reception, but with one reserve on the part of Maiorescu as regards Scatiu's language: "Realism, yes, but let it be artistic! Already our language is becoming slightly vulgar when it tries to be familiar."[3] To which Zamfirescu replies: "It is true that Scatiu's language is rather vulgar, but I consider that that is Scatiu's fault, not the language's. I think that in *Viaţa la ţară* the intimate speech is quite different from that in *Scatiu*."[4] An important point emerges from this exchange of literary opinions: Zamfirescu's artistic intuition made him, when necessary, go beyond the aestheticism to which Maiorescu always remained bound.

That Zamfirescu made a villain of Tănase Scatiu is true. He "passed sentence on the miserable *arendaş*" as he had promised, and he did it with such passion that sometimes he slips into caricature. That is why the artistic balance and harmony of *Viaţa la ţară* here tends toward discords, excesses, and violence. But who can challenge the odious truth of *Tănase Scatiu* and the language in which it is written?

I În Război

The novel was written in 1897 "partly at Tivoli, Villa Gregoriana, partly at Rome, Via Condotti." It emerges from letters written at the time that for at least four years, that is to say while he was writing *Viaţa la ţară* and *Tănase Scatiu*, Duiliu Zamfirescu was preoccupied with the history of the 1877 War of Independence. He read and reread war books, classical books like Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, and war novels. Tolstoy in particular was the object of a detailed study, as is proved by countless comments and an essay on Russian novelists.[5]

În război was to continue the Comăneşteanu chronicle with the tale of Mihai Comăneşteanu. The hero was to take part in the war. It was a duty, the sacrifice approved by the class of native boyars of whom the Comăneşteanu family formed part. It turned out, however, that what should have been the story of an imaginary hero became a war novel. It was conceived in a state of extreme patriotic tension, "written in a flash from p. 1 to p. 169." As he finished it Zamfirescu wrote to Maiorescu that he had never been more exalted in spirit, a state in which he continued a long time after the conclusion

of the work. The tone of the letters sent at that time to Maiorescu and to his friend Nicolae Petraşcu, in which he speaks of *În război*, is a vibrant note of exaltation from which it is clear how much importance Zamfirescu attached to the work.

I should like you to observe the complex unity of the work so as to understand the fundamental idea of it: a deliberate mixture of historical fact and patriotic enthusiasm intended to set the greatest event of our Romanian life in this century in a living light for future generations,

he writes to Petraşcu.[6] It is again to Petraşcu that he writes after traveling in Romania in the winter of 1896–97:

Immediately after returning . . . I plunged into writing the third novel in the *Viaţa la ţară* series. *În război* is an essay in essentially Romanian psychology . . . no one has hitherto attempted to bring to life the enthusiasm of this epic through which we have lived, to catch the personality of Romanians in all classes, made manifest in a moment of such intense living.[7]

At the same time the novel aimed at showing

the beneficial action of this war upon our governing class in stopping for some time the development of that class's skepticism and irony, a characteristic inherited from the Latins and aggravated by the Phanariots, by confronting it with danger and in particular confronting it with the peasants' strength of character.[8]

As a matter of fact the subject of the 1877 war was fashionable in the literature of the time. Alecsandri had written *Ostaşii noştri* (Our Soldiers) 1878, Coşbuc published *Războiul nostru pentru neatîrnare* (Our War for Independence) and *Povestea unei coroane de oţel* (The Story of a Crown of Steel) in 1899 and *Cîntece de Vitejie* (Songs of Heroism) in 1904. Later Sadoveanu was to write *Povestiri din război* (War Stories). Zamfirescu himself in his early sketches and in his short story "*Locotenentul Sterie*" had written of men and scenes in the 1877 war. He had his own memories which no doubt served him in rendering the atmosphere. In 1877 at the age of nineteen he had been an eyewitness of the scenes which took place at Focşani when the news arrived of the death of Major Şonţu and other citizens of the town, an episode used also in his short story "*Locotenentul Sterie.*" The emotions felt then never left him.

Zamfirescu was keen on the historical aspect of the novel and had documented himself so as to create a work which would be true from

the historical point of view. "Everything which is there has been long prepared, both what is my own invention and what is the basis of historical fact."[9] His principal source of information was Theodor Văcărescu's work *Luptele Românilor* (The Battles of the Romanians).

În război appeared first in *Convorbiri literare*, 1897–98. It was translated into French in 1900 under the title *Temps de Guerre* and published by Ollendorf. It appears as a volume in Romanian in 1902 with a second edition in 1907. Maiorescu was enthusiastic about the novel, as is clear from his *Însemnări zilnice*. Its impact on the public was limited, however, which greatly affected Zamfirescu. But the thing which especially hurt him was the award of the Academy's prize in 1903 to Slavici. It was a prize for the best short story on a war theme. Zamfirescu felt deeply wronged and took his revenge by writing "*Literatura română şi scriitorii ardeleni*" (Romanian Literature and the Transylvanian Writers) in September 1903. It was an unjust attack on the Transylvanians, by which Zamfirescu was indirectly aiming at Dimitrie A. Sturdza, the leader of the Liberal party, his perpetual enemy. Zamfirescu was convinced that the reason why he had not received the prize was partly political. In his novel he had given prominence to the heroism of the army, of the soldiers, a fact which had not escaped the notice of the king's entourage, where Sturdza's influence was predominant. The article, however, also displeased Maiorescu, who supported Slavici and who, at the same time, was negotiating politically with the Liberals. Once again Zamfirescu's impetuosity did him a disservice.

În război is the story of an episode in the War of Independence in which the Romanian troops behaved heroically: the assault made by the Tenth Dorobanţi Regiment on the Turkish redoubt at Grivitza on August 30 1877. The geographical and historical data are authentic. The Battle of Grivitza is one of the heroic pages of Romanian military history.[10] The war was waged in the present-day Bulgaria, at that time a province of the Turkish Empire, whereas the Romanian Principalities (after 1859 the United Principalities) were vassal states and so had a certain degree of independence compared to the territories south of the Danube—present-day Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece. The war which broke out between the Turks and the Russians was of decisive importance for the future of the Romanians. History now gave them the chance of freeing themselves once and for all from Ottoman tutelage. At first, however, things were not so clear. The entry of Romania into the war depended on the other great power—the "protecting power"—Russia, which kept for itself the right of conducting the war, considering its Romanian protégés as a

supply base, a place of passage, and possibly a military aid. Alliance with the protecting power implied in the first place the presence of Russian troops on Romanian territory, which was viewed with apprehension by Romanian public opinion. This feeling toward the Russians was bound up with historical developments. From the beginning of the nineteenth century the growing influence of Russia had been directly felt by the Romanian lands which were its neighbors. With the decline of Ottoman power the "protective" Russian presence had become ever more insistent and oppressive. And so at the start of the war of 1877 there existed, psychologically speaking, a paradoxical situation, which throws light on the whole history of a small country like Romania, caught up in the game of the great powers. In the short term, Romanian public opinion felt more aversion for the Russian presence than for the distant authority of the Ottoman suzerain.[11]

> Having entered quietly into the war, without public opinion being prepared, without hatred for the Turks (in fact even with a certain reluctance toward the Russians) . . . the Romanians showed their capacity for resistance and above all, struck the precise note of their mood. Until Grivitza all went calmly and seriously, with their thoughts concentrated by the approach of danger, with a certain coloring of ironic naivety—so characteristically Romanian! After the assault of 30 August, hearts were suddenly lifted up, and the confused sounds grew clear as if a chord of strong emotion had been struck in the voiceless bosom of the land.[12]

The action of the novel begins in this psychological climate of latent antagonism to the Russians, of discussions between the government and the Russian military authorities about the status of the Romanian army, of procrastination of preparations for entry into the war. The narrative is divided, roughly speaking, into two periods, composing together a crescendo up to the apotheosis of the battle. The first part covers the preparation of the war up to the eve of the battle of Grivitza; the second, the night before the battle, the day of the assault and the death of Comăneşteanu. The narrative begins on 23 April 1877, the day on which the papers announce the crossing of the Pruth by the Russian armies on their way toward the Danube. We are in the Bucharest of the 1877 crisis: on the one hand the scene in the streets, on the other the atmosphere of the boyar houses. The picture is painted with precision by an observant eyewitness. A street scene on the eve of war opens the story. The merchants and craftsmen of the old quarters mingle with the officials of the new administration. All are pouring toward Podul Mogoşoaiei, the present Calea Victoriei,

where the newspaper sellers are announcing the disturbing news: "The Russians are coming." The old names of the guilds of craftsmen are used by the writer, with the result that the scene is a veritable print of old Bucharest.

A few pages further on, through the hotel window (the same hotel where Zamfirescu stayed for a long time and which later became the Continental) Mihai Comăneşteanu sees the cabs in the square outside the National Theatre and sends out for the French newspaper *L'Orient*, which was to become *L'Indépendance Roumaine*. "A few stray cabmen were folding back the hoods of their cabs, the corners of their Muscovite livery tucked into their belts." Anyone who knew Bucharest before 1944 remembers the old National Theatre, destroyed by the Germans in that year, the theater depicted in the novel. He will recall that Bucharest people never walked a step but straightway flung themselves into a cab, exactly like the heroes of Zamfirescu.

This is the Bucharest which lives in the boyar houses in which the heroes of the novel move around, the Comăneşteanus' house or the Milescus' house. In contrast to the people of the *mahalale*, life here follows the Paris fashion: it is life in society, there is always a place laid for a guest, there is open house, one gives balls, the men go to the club, the ladies go shopping in town. Accustomed by their history to troubled times and insecurity—almost every generation has experienced occupation or witnessed a war—the upper and lower classes of Bucharest do not lose their nerve until the last moment. Panic only begins when it is heard that simultaneously with the declaration of war the Turks have begun raids across the Danube scarcely sixty kilometers from Bucharest, while the Russians, "encamped around the towns and villages, begin to raid people's shops and henhouses."

Mihai Comăneşteanu, with his call-up papers in his pocket, meets a friend from his student days in Paris, Nicolae Milescu, who has also been called up. Milescu is part of the same world as Mihai and his place in the novel, like that of Mihai himself, is in the foreground. But the contrast between them is total. Mihai is measured in his movements and temperate in his language. He charms the women and has many love affairs. The novel shows him torn until the moment of leaving for the front between his former mistress Natalia Canta and his last love, the young Anna Villara, whom he would probably have married if he had not died. In his moments of solitude Comăneşteanu is a man ravaged by insecurity and melancholy moods à la Duiliu Zamfirescu. What saves him is action and the discipline he imposes on himself.

Nicolae Milescu, on the contrary, is a stormy extrovert, a force of nature: tall, strong, loud-voiced with verbal mannerisms, jocular, a tease. He has an artistic nature: he sings, plays the piano and the harmonica, and recites verses. Milescu loves his wife with a feeling of tender affection and does not think of other women. He is also a clubman and an inveterate cardplayer.

Conversations at table in Milescu's house or in the drawing room of Saşa Comăneşteanu revolve around the matter on the agenda—the war. The situation is obscure. It is not known what role the Romanian army will play if it is given the opportunity to fight. Comăneşteanu and Milescu share the same feeling for their country, the same conception of their patriotic duty. Their ideas about Romania's past and the requirements of the present, their heroic impulses, Milescu's declarations, constitute a veritable profession of faith on the part of a world in which Zamfirescu believed—the old Romanian world of "true-born" Romanians, nationalists and patriots, lovers of their country and of their race, as one used to say.

There are conversations taken from life, in which Zamfirescu excels. All the leitmotifs of the Romanians when they begin to talk about their past turn up here: the unhappy lot of Romania, the memory of heroic times in the past when the little Danubian states were not yet crushed by the Turks, invectives against the Phanariots.

Captain Dudescu, Comăneşteanu's brother-in-law, exclaims:

> We shall be a promenade for the Russian armies . . . as we have always been since the Phanariots laid hands on us. O Lord, how I should like the Dracula family to come back and purge our country of pagans!

The "pagans" are the foreigners who overrun the native population. The invocation to the Draculas, that is to the princely family of Vlad the Impaler, the famous "Dracula," occurs again on Milescu's lips after a tirade against the Phanariot decadence of the eighteenth century, when the governing class "ran with purses of money and bowed head from pasha to consul, from Phanariot to Muscovite, from one prince to another." After that Milescu breaks out into a violent diatribe against the defects of the ruling class, many of whom are of Phanariot origin. It is true he declares, that

> the Phanariots brought us culture, but they also brought us tainted blood: poltroonery, bombast and hypocrisy. Go into a drawing-room, watch the men this evening at a ball, and you will think that you are at Constantinople or Athens. Take a branch of the administration, take the elections: corruption everywhere.

His sister-in-law, Anna Villara, disputes his assertion that the corruption of morals is solely due to the Phanariots:

> In the time of Vlad the Impaler there were no Phanariots and yet impaling was invented by this good Romanian precisely to root out stealing and corruption.

Milescu replies furiously:

> If there was stealing in Vlad's day, that proves nothing. At all times and among all nations there have been moments of administrative decadence. But the very fact that Vlad the Impaler came and rooted out the evil shows that there was virtue left in the boyar classes, since Vlad was a native boyar, of the family of Dracula and Basarab. Just you show me the prince, whether foreign or a native boyar, who in Phanariot times rose up against them. Not one . . . I am Milescu. I shall go to fight the Turks, the Russians, the Tartars and the Devil if need be!

Such were the thoughts of generations of conservative boyars up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

The most celebrated exponent of these ideas, taken to the extreme of downright xenophobia in literature, was Eminescu in his famous *Doina* and in his *Scrisoarea a III-a* (Third Letter), in which the invocation of Vlad the Impaler as a remedy for corruption and crime keeps on returning. Vlad the Impaler, son of Vlad Dracul, was prince of Wallachia (1456–1462) and was famous for the cruelty with which he punished his enemies, impaling them on stakes. He has remained in the Romanian imagination as a sort of scourge of God against their foes. It was he too who gave birth in Central Europe to the legend of the vampire Dracula, later exploited by lovers of sensation. It is therefore not surprising that Vlad the Impaler is mentioned in the course of the conversation. That the Romanian boyar class intermarried with the Greeks from the Phanar but that this did not prevent patriotism existing among them, is proved by the case of Milescu's own wife, Elena, and her sister Anna, who are shown as Greek on their father's side and Romanian on the side of their mother, née Golescu. Anna Villara's subtle wit and her sharp critical sense are Greek traits which Zamfirescu does not try to conceal.

In contrast to his harsh criticism of the ruling class, the attitude of the people at the moment of war is viewed with the old sympathy and understanding with which Zamfirescu regarded the peasants in *Viaţa la ţară*. The people

carried on as usual, with a tough effort of will, waiting for the morrow to bring disaster. Here was neither great enthusiasm nor great fear. A calm submission to fate, a certain skepticism left over from past generations, a shake of the head at the passing of bands of soldiers, and away in the background of consciousness the assurance that taxes and difficulties would increase.

They are a people accustomed to hardship, patient and skeptical.

As the war becomes a reality—the Turkish bashibazouks make raids across the Danube, striking terror into the population, and the Russians install their camps close to Romanian towns and villages—the story of the imaginary characters blends with the story of the real war. The novel now becomes entwined with the chronicle of events.

The action unfolds in the region of the Danube, near Giurgiu, where there are stationed the 10th Dorobanţi regiment and the 8th regiment of the line, to which Comăneşteanu and Milescu belong. The author describes exactly the disposition of the Romanian and Turkish troops on the two banks of the Danube, and the details of the beginning of action. The names of places and persons are real. The Russian troops cross the Danube under cover of the Romanian artillery. The Grand Duke Nicholas, the commander-in-chief of the Russian forces, has conceived the plan of advancing direct on Constantinople. Prince Gortchakof gives the Romanian government, which is preoccupied with the fate of the country and the Romanian army, the contemptuous answer that the Imperial army is capable of waging the war on its own and that "if the Romanian army wants to cross the Danube too, it must do so on its own responsibility and on condition that it comes under Russian command," which Prince Carol and the Romanian government cannot accept. The Romanian army therefore remains in waiting, but the orders are "to keep the troops continually on the alert." But the Russian armies come up against unexpected Turkish resistance and are beaten before Plevna. The Russians then ask the Romanian troops for help. The Grand Duke Nicholas sends Prince Carol the famous despatch of which the author reproduces a part: "Cross the Danube where you like: the Turks are crushing us." [13] Prince Carol agrees to cross the Danube on one condition: that the Romanian army should keep its "independent existence." On 15 August the Prince goes to the Russian headquarters, where Tsar Alexander II in person offers him the command of the united Romanian-Russian forces which were to operate under the name of the Army of the West.

The 10th regiment of Dorobanţi, in which the author places Comăneşteanu, and the 8th regiment of the line, to which Milescu belongs, cross the Danube with the 3rd Division. General Cernat's

Order of the Day No. 54 of 30 August 1877 is given in full in the narrative, with the composition of each column of attack and the name of each officer and the plan of battle. Over the inclusion of the two Orders of the Day in the novel, Zamfirescu had a heated discussion with Maiorescu by correspondence. Zamfirescu argued in favor of the authenticity which resulted from the inclusion of contemporary documents—a very modern idea—whereas Maiorescu would not agree. In this respect too Zamfirescu appears as a forerunner, and this is stressed by George Călinescu:

a Romanian writer who was in 1898 a theoretician of authenticity and of the official record in the line of Stendhal and André Gide, and who was an antistylist and so an anti-Flaubertian at the time when Flaubertianism was in full swing, seems a paradox.[14]

Comăneşteanu's battalion is commanded by Major Şonţu, one of the heroes of 1877. The portrait of Şonţu as imagined by Zamfirescu shows him with the traits of the perfect professional soldier, but also as a clear-headed and cultivated man, who has reflected on the psychology of war like a modern war specialist, reaching the conclusion that "only the strong nations fight and the future belongs exclusively to those who know how to fight! All this modern humanitarianism is sheer hysteria!" What is interesting is the admiration of Şonţu, the man of order and discipline, for the anarchists. Though he would not hesitate to shoot them, they are nevertheless "the only group of idealists for whom I feel respect" because "they bring with them the will power which is the secret of any individual conscience" and because Şonţu is convinced of "the need for the spirit of denial" embodied in the anarchists. After the publication of the Order of the Day for 30 August, Şonţu has no illusions; he knows that he will die next day, granted the conditions in which the assault will be undertaken, but he affirms in simple words: "Somebody must die for this country." Heroic words invented by Zamfirescu, but they are most appropriately introduced into Şonţu's conversation with Comăneşteanu, coming from a man like him who has trained himself for sacrifice. Besides Şonţu there also figures in the narrative, though less prominently, another hero of 1877, Valter Mărăcineanu, in whose regiment Milescu fights.

The Grivitza redoubt was an important defense work sited on a hill, with many rows of fortifications around it which the Romanian soldiers had to capture by assault. The attack took place on 30 August 1877. In conformity with instructions the soldiers had "to have all their cartridges with them and to wear tunics without knapsacks or

cloaks." Only the Dorobanţi were allowed cloaks. The soldiers attacked with bayonets and the officers with swords, just as in the days of the Napoleonic Wars. The Romanian army's losses were colossal, the first battalions headed by their officers being annihilated by the Turkish fire. But in the end the redoubt was captured and the victory had an immense impact on the morale of the Romanians, who till then had been unsure of their own strength and humiliated between the Russians and the Turks. Milescu and Mihai Comăneşteanu die alongside the nameless peasant heroes of the war of independence. Comăneşteanu's last words are symbolic: "Regenerate yourselves by tears as we regenerated ourselves by blood." Symbolic too is the last page on which, many years later, "Saşa was taking her boy to the military school at Jassy. He was now named Alexandru Comăneşteanu, as the dead man had desired."

Zamfirescu was right when he maintained that he had written a good war book; the authentic historical facts are expertly interwoven with imaginary scenes. One night Major Şonţu, Mihai Comăneşteanu, and Milescu cross the Danube with sixty soldiers to scare the Turks and to make them stop their raids on the Romanian shore. Everything happens in darkness. The black boats with their sharp bottoms and their upcurved ends are hard to load; at the least touch they lean over to one side. In the darkness fragments of the soldiers' talk are heard. Among the soldiers is a gypsy with toothache. His comrades laugh at him.

"Have it out, Sticlete; you'll grow another."
"I'd have it out, Petrea, but before your tooth's out, your life's gone too."
"It'll be a milktooth, lad."
"Put some gunpowder on it, gypsy, and strike a light," said the corporal.

One soldier is afraid to get into the boat. The men at the oars talk to one another. The atmosphere is of night on the water with the unknown all round.

The men felt their stomachs empty as if they had not eaten for two days. The silence, the darkness of the night, the whispering gurgle of the eddies, the unease of most of the men. The water flowed imperceptibly. Here and there unexplained gleams were reflected in the oily eddies of the Danube. Distant twinklings of stars crinkled on the moving swell.

Short and violent action follows: the attack on a post of Turkish sentries taken by surprise, with the unbridled savagery of the very men who till just now had felt shudders of fear on their way to the Turkish bank, the most violent being the soldier who had been afraid to get into the boat. When Milescu's head clears after the fury of the action, he wonders, "Is this war?"

Another scene full of life and truth is the drunkenness of the Russian officers of the Preobrazhensky regiment in a tavern run by a Greek, to which Milescu finds his way.

Dead with hunger, Milescu looked for an eating-house. He had done his duty by others; now it was right that he should do it to himself. He was directed to a hut of planks, erected in haste by one of the thousands of individuals who followed the army about, mongrels of no known country or calling: Jews, Romanians, Armenians, Russians: eating-house keepers, moneylenders, undertakers.

The looks and style of the Russian officers are described, from the general to Prince Galitzine, blond and with the face of a girl, with whom Milescu must drink willy-nilly.

The Russian started again on the champagne, with "Dieu vous bégnisse" after each mouthful. And again creme de menthe and again "bellini" [Galitzine meant *pelin*, a sort of vermouth] and again champagne, till Milescu fell under the table.

Perhaps one of the most successful as a genre scene is the game of cards among the officers billeted in Milescu's house. They play poker, each with his own mannerisms and card-player's lingo, from which it is clear that Zamfirescu was an expert in this field.

The qualities of this novel—the construction of its action, the movement rising to its denouement, the excellence of the dialogues—reveal the classical realist. In the foreground are the heroes of the war: Major Şonţu, Mihai Comăneşteanu, and Milescu. Milescu springs from one of the author's happy intuitions; his stormy temperament personifies the war in a tonality different from that of the professional soldier Şonţu. His dash and vitality are paradoxically just as necessary to the courage to die heroically as are Şonţu's qualities of lucidity and discipline. Why did Zamfirescu feel the need to make Milescu recite verse on his way to the front? To stress the emotional side of the character? It was a weakness of his as a poet, and many characters in his novels recite verses in moments of exaltation. Titu Maiorescu secured the shortening of the marching song which Milescu improvises. On the other hand the poem "*Un castel pe malul mării*" (A Castle on the Seashore), which Milescu recites one evening in the country, in a scene full of charm and humor, was left intact.

In the middle distance, and yet in the foreground of the war, are the soldiers. Their presence is just as solid as that of the chief heroes, their officers. As for Prince Carol I, he appears on the battlefield in the morning of August 30 as in a classic military picture. The conversation of the soldiers in the bivouac of the 10th Dorobanţi regiment the night before the battle is a page admirable in its authenticity. The soldiers are peasants. They talk about their anxieties, their fear that they will die and their cattle be left unpaid for and their maize unharvested. *În război* is, as Zamfirescu says, the apotheosis of the 10th Dorobanţi regiment. In fact, it is the apotheosis of the peasant-soldiers, and is in line with the right-wing democracy of Zamfirescu who sang the praises of the peasants and left us the portrait of the shepherd Micu.

The movement of the narrative and the liveliness and naturalness of the dialogue are Zamfirescu's strong points. The rhythm, and thus the composition, are different from that of *Viaţa la ţară* or *Tănase Scatiu*. The imminence of war precludes the calm of everyday life. The fatal denouement is suggested by the movement of the characters. Everything happens in a "last-moment" atmosphere: the haste and outbursts of Milescu, the emotional involvements of Mihai Comăneşteanu, the implacable onward march of military orders whose fulfillment is personified by Major Şonţu. From time to time a description visually sums up a moment of the action. Such is the tableau of the Bucharest street at the start. Then, at the moment when the order to cross the Danube reaches Prince Carol, Zamfirescu depicts a splendid military tableau:

> On the transparent clearness of the sky rays of opal splayed out like endless spokes, vanishing far off in the blue glory of the air and caressing the plains of Oltenia with the joyous light of morning. On the valley of the Dănăţeu a swarm of human beings were in movement, long lines of cavalry and infantry, guns, ambulances, stores, in the midst of military bands, of the sound of buglers. The brass instruments shone in warm tones; cold gleams glittered from the metal of the guns; the flags fluttered in the wind; over all floated a breath of young life, bearing onwards the golden eagles of the standards, descendants of the eagles of other days, an emblem of manliness.

As for the love interest, that is, the role of women in this war novel, Titu Maiorescu had asked what happened to those who were left widows: Elena Milescu, Saşa's sisters Victoria and Mary, and the others, Natalia and Anna, for there are many women in this war novel. Zamfirescu's answer was this:

> I thought that the novel would come out longer. In my plan Anna and Natalia were to carry "The War" further on another side. But the temperature to which spirits were raised in the military action properly so-called does not permit further development without a lowering of the heat.[15]

The plan of which Zamfirescu speaks refers to the first idea of the book, which was to have been the story of Mihai Comăneşteanu and which later turned into the story of the war. Maiorescu was justified in asking for information on the fate of the female characters. Zamfirescu had composed scenes, according to his favorite technique, and in the end failed to explain the fate of any but the war heroes Mihai Comăneşteanu and Nicolae Milescu. We meet with Natalia and Anna again in *Îndreptări* and *Anna* as heroines with emotional involvements, fulfilling their destiny as lovers with "the instinctive duplicity of feminine hearts," and Elena as a hero's inconsolable widow. Only Saşa Comăneşteanu has fulfilled her destiny and fully revealed her personality.

Of the ethical value of his novel Zamfirescu had no doubt at all. He was convinced that he had written "the first serious and persistent attempt to depict our times."

II Îndreptări

While he was writing *Lydda*, which was to serve as a personal "guide" for himself, Zamfirescu broke off to write a guide addressed to Romanian society. The idea of the moral regeneration of the Romanians had been haunting him for a long while, as the last words of Mihai Comăneşteanu show. From this idea was born *Îndreptări*, a strange work of social and national mission, which he called a novel.

The writer put into it many of his convictions, many of the ideas to which he was most attached, convinced in any case that he was writing a book of great value. The moralist and the artist within him dwell side by side in this hybrid production, in which pages of literature—writing of charm—alternate with romantic sermonizing. The passion with which the book is written holds our attention in spite of its didacticism. That is why it was accepted by his contemporaries, the people most directly concerned. There is another aspect interesting from the literary point of view. Comparison of confidential remarks made in letters about certain politicians with their presentation in the novel complete the picture of the age, placing it somewhere between the excessive idealization of the novel and the

excessive criticism of the letters. So *Îndreptări* becomes a sort of subjective document about the period.

The central theme of the work had for some time been vaguely discernible among the images of Romania which haunted Zamfirescu. In his cycle of meditations *Măsura dreaptă a vieţii* (The True Measure of Life) he writes: "One of the few ideals of the Romanians is the future Dacia. All the same, no Romanian so far is the living symbol of this ideal." The future Dacia means the union of the Romanians scattered through the neighboring foreign countries: Transylvania, Bucovina, and Bessarabia. The Comăneşteanu cycle had closed with the apotheosis of the 1877 war. The next step after independence must be the union.

At the end of 1899 Zamfirescu sent a patriotic poem, "*Bucovina*," to *Convorbiri literare* with a letter to Maiorescu in which he asserted that he saw no other ideal in the future except union and added: "I have long been playing with the thought of a novel set in Bucovina and Transylvania. Unfortunately I only know them very little and my great desire, when I become head of mission, is to be able to go on leave in the summer and to tour all our mountains from Bucovina to Severin." [16] The much-desired journey took place in July 1901, when *Îndreptări* had already been begun (September-October 1900). Zamfirescu broke off work in order to gather information on the spot and finished the book at the end of 1901.

The author's travel impressions are preserved for us in a letter. At Arad he had dinner with several local Romanians, the director of a credit company, a bishop's deputy, the secretary of the consistory, and other priests. These were the intellectuals of Arad and Sibiu who were to serve as material for the creation of three characters in the novel: the notary Zgurea, the priest, and the bishop. He was struck by the fact that these intellectuals were abreast of all that was being published in Romania. Transylvania, when Zamfirescu saw it, was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Romanians in Transylvania were still under the impression of the recent affair of the Memorandum.

Faced with the intensive campaign of Magyarisation waged by the Hungarian authorities, the Romanian masses had attempted to defend themselves. Of the four nations who composed the population: Magyars, Saxons, Szekelys, and Romanians, the latter (who were the most numerous, forming the greater part of the rural population) were the only ones subjected to political and cultural discrimination. For example, in 1884 restrictive electoral laws only allowed them three deputies in the Budapest parliament. The historian R. W. Seton-Watson writes:

> The more Romanian a county was, the fewer votes did it possess. Thus out of the seventy-four deputies whom Transylvania sent to Budapest, thirty-five represented the four Magyar counties and the chief towns which together formed only 20 percent of the population, whereas only thirty deputies represented the remaining 72 percent of the population, which was predominantly Romanian. In other words, there was among the Romanians an average of one deputy to every 50,000 to 60,000 inhabitants, but among the Szekels one to 4 to 5,000![17]

In 1881 the Romanians created the Romanian National party, which drew up a list of claims. In 1892 the Romanians presented a memorandum to the Emperor in Vienna, demanding the rights which were granted to the other nationalities in Transylvania. A Romanian delegation had gone to Vienna to hand the document to the Emperor Franz-Josef, but he did not receive them. The Memorandum was sent to the Hungarian Premier, who rejected it without reading it. Then the Romanians printed the text and distributed it. In 1894 there was a monster lawsuit in which the Memorandists were condemned to prison. The lawsuit marked the start of a new wave of persecutions. In 1895 the Romanian National party was dissolved. A law was promulgated forbidding assemblies of Romanians. In 1898 the Romanians' right of association was suppressed, and the Romanian language press was practically banned and the campaign to magyarize Christian names was intensified. This is the context of Zamfirescu's trip through Transylvania. On the fly-leaf of the manuscript of *Îndreptări* was the note:

> This novel was written at Rome, Via Condotti 61, in the year 1900. It will be followed by two others with the same hero. I need to establish a character who at need can raise Transylvania.

The hero referred to is none other than Alexandru Damian-Comăneşteanu, Saşa's son, for whom the author had great plans, unrealizable even with the help of the most heated imagination, inasmuch as the union of Transylvania was—historically speaking—unforeseeable in 1900. Nevertheless Zamfirescu was destined to see with his own eyes in 1919 the fulfillment of the Romanians' great hopes. To the end of his life in 1922 the novelist regretted that he had not been able to achieve his epic in the person of Alexandru Com-

ăneşteanu. The hero's participation in "raising" Transylvania remained in the sphere of unfulfilled speculations.

Writing to Maiorescu about the novel, Zamfirescu announces it thus:

> There are four characters in it: Anna Villara, her husband the General, Alexandru Comăneşteanu (Saşa's son) and a Transylvanian priest's daughter who is being educated in Bucharest. The moral thread of the novel is the spiritual rectitude brought to bear by the daughter of poor people on the intrigues and complications of the others, awakening them all as from an evil dream. I think it should be a good subject.[18]

How then is this curious so-called "novel" made up? Alexandru Comăneşteanu, a young officer and "a bit of a lad," successful with the women of Bucharest (like his uncle the hero of Grivitza), fortuitously marries a Transylvanian girl. Porţia-Mia, the girl with the qualities of her forefathers (the "spiritual rectitude") but who happens to be both beautiful and strong, is the daughter of Moise Lupu, priest of Hureşti near Sibiu. The marriage is arranged by Anna Villara, who figured in *În război.*

Anna is now a mature woman whom life has changed, accentuating her "unbalanced and complicated nature." Her pride and innate tendency to *zeflemea* (sarcastic irony) are put down to her Greek descent. Anna is married to General Villara, a quite opposite type: a bon vivant, a man of the world, a "spurred and scented" soldier who is devoted to soirées at Capşa and keeps a young mistress. His departure from the country in the carriage driven by his drunken coachman is a good realistic scene and typically Romanian. Anna had been faithful in her married life, a fact remarked on as a rarity in the world of Bucharest, "but without merit since it was her pride that saved her from errors." Now, although almost twenty years older than he, Anna realizes that her maternal feeling for Alexandru Comăneşteanu has changed into love and she struggles vainly with jealousy. But it is she who arranges his marriage with her young protégée Porţia, nicknamed Mia, at the end of a scene which almost closes in melodrama. At the moment when Alexandru is on his knees kissing her hand—actually to ask forgiveness for the harsh words he has uttered ("Often I feel sorry for you. You live your life in thought instead of living it in reality"), the orderly, a rather stupid soldier, comes in and announces the general's arrival. On the spur of the moment Anna invents a daring explanation: Alexandru has been kneeling at her feet to ask for the hand of the young Porţia-Mia! Knowing Anna's character we accept that she could not have borne the comments of the servants. In

any case, the poor soldier is sacked on his mistress's orders. Alexandru Comăneşteanu, faced with a *fait accompli*, rebels, but in the end behaves like a gentleman and agrees to marry Mia.

From the first chapters to the departure of the young couple on their honeymoon in Italy, the only scene of epic creation properly speaking is a splendid wolf hunt in the depth of winter. Alexandru goes to see his father, Matei Damian, at Comăneşti. Here Zamfirescu finds himself once more in his element, the country atmosphere of the old-fashioned house in which Damian lives, in the solitude dear to the Romanian soul. Together with the shepherd Micu, who is now an old man himself, Alexandru sets out for the hunt in a sledge with the shepherd's hounds behind them. "The young horses galloped over the white ground, cleaving the air like the birds of heaven." Comăneşteanu has difficulty in stopping them:

> But as though maddened by their own speed, the horses trembled, neighing and turning their eyes in all directions. They were marvelous. All their muscles were in motion; the steam rose from them as from boiling water; they stamped their feet, turning up the snow with their hooves.

When the wolves appear, the instinct to hunt and kill awakes in men and dogs alike.

> Some of the hounds, the older ones, had flung themselves on the wolves, while the younger seemed to be waiting to come to their aid. The wolves, instead of running away, had turned to face the dogs. Suddenly seized with a warm thrill Comăneşteanu leaped aside, as the horses had done, and rushed toward the hill, shouting like a madman: "Look, man, there's the wolf!" The dogs all spurted through the snow toward the ridge of the hill. In the swift rush of images the young man saw his shadow on the glittering white as it ran alongside him.

The savagery of the hounds in the presence of the wolves, the elemental force which draws them back to their previous state, is abated by the gesture of the man who tames the animal:

> With growing excitement he ran after the wolves, urging on the hounds and yelling like a madman: "Look, man, there's the wolf!" They were all rushing up the slope of the hill, the hounds leaping, he slipping, all fired with the same instincts of the wild beast. In their wild onrush a dog kept holding him up, half playing, half growling. He stopped a moment and looked at it: its eyes were glittering in its head and its whiskers curling over its dog-teeth. Then he turned his gun downwards and called the hound to him, stroking his head. It calmed down as by magic.

The chapter with the hunt stands like a piece of artistic painting in the midst of pages of social and political criticism at Anna Villara's house. Here are displayed the ideas about the Romanians "as they are" and "as they should be"; here are the "guide-lines." The protagonists of the conversations are divided into two camps. On one side are Anna Villara and the general; they represent Bucharest society and the governing class of Romania about 1900, as well as the typical spirit of *zeflemea*.

Anna and the general were immersed in reckless criticism, as usually happens with Romanians, of all that they had in their country, politicians, men of letters, actors, musicians, painters. Everything was worthless according to them; everything was foreign.

Zamfirescu had frequently described the Romanians' tendency to *zeflemea*: "a generous skepticism, with a rather vulgar irony, good-natured and without staying power. . . . This skepticism is borrowed from foreign blood," he asserted, inasmuch as the Romanian is characterized by a "strain of artlessness." Zamfirescu had his own theory about the Romanian's "spiritual artlessness" or "underlying artlessness" combined with skepticism, characteristics which do not necessarily have anything to do with social position. Milescu and Mihai Comăneşteanu, who die like heroes in the war, Saşa Comăneşteanu, Matei Damian, and here the family of the priest Lupu, are all of the "artless" sort. Zamfirescu himself oscillates between skepticism and artlessness. Thus, if we judge by opinions expressed in certain letters, Zamfirescu is often in agreement with General Villara and Anna. His own contradictions are reflected in the novel.

Anna and the general are challenged in argument by Father Lupu, the Transylvanian, who cannot reconcile himself to the skepticism of the Romanians. "You misjudge your country and your men . . .," and to support his point of view he makes an impassioned plea on behalf of politicians without distinction of party, both conservative and liberal. There follows a portrait and eulogy of Titu Maiorescu. Father Lupu (alias Zamfirescu, for it is he who is speaking) describes the state of Romania as it was when the country needed putting to rights. Maiorescu is revealed as the man who "reclaimed" culture by his criticism, by the creation of *Junimea*, by university courses, by regulating the written language: it is due to him that "we write as we speak." Father Lupu defends Romanian cultural institutions like a good pedagogue: the Romanian Academy, the National Theatre, the actors (there was at that time a pleiad of famous actors and singers) and "our country's child prodigy who has astounded the foreigners: George Enescu." It is Zamfirescu speaking through the mouth of Father Lupu; he was an enthusiastic admirer of the musician and had supported him from the start.

After this incursion into "theses," the novel returns to the course already begun. The "guide-lines" now develop through symbolic actions. Alexandru and Mia go on their honeymoon to Rome, a symbolic journey to the sources of the latinity of the Romanian people. The pilgrimage to Trajan's Column was for the Romanians of Transylvania a holy duty. The Transylvanian intellectuals, the so-called "Latinist school," had stimulated the Romanians' consciousness and kept it awake by the two arguments of the conquest of Dacia by Trajan and the neo-Latin character of the Romanian language. Mia's emotion in face of the column is typical and absolutely true to life, as is, for example, the emotion of an American before the statue of Lincoln or before George Washington's house at Mount Vernon. "It is our Column!" Mia knows the bas-reliefs beforehand: "There's where they're crossing the Ister [Danube] to us. . . . There's our gaffer." "Gaffer?" asked Alexandru puzzled at the peasant expression. "Our Dacian, dressed just as they do at Hureşti." (She is referring, of course to Decebalus, king of the Dacians, defeated by Trajan in A.D. 102 and 106.)

In a sketch published in 1897 in his friend Nicolae Petraşcu's review *Literatura şi arta română*, Zamfirescu had given a humorous account of his encounter with the folk-pilgrim Badea' Cîrţan. This was a peasant from Transylvania who had come to Rome on foot to see Trajan's Column. He had caused a sensation in the streets by his curious appearance. Finally he ended up at the police station and from there at the Romanian legation. "From knees to throat he is buried in a goat, and from throat upwards in a sheep. Whatever you ask him, he keeps on answering: Mama Roma, Mama Roma." Amused, but moved, Zamfirescu sees in the picturesque but "rather nonsensical" pilgrim an illustration of peasant nationalism in Transylvania.

The other place in Rome which Mia had visited is the college "De Propaganda Fide," where her father had studied. But the true message of the novel begins with the return of the young couple to Romania by way of Transylvania: it is the need for closer relations with the Romanian brethren beyond the Carpathians, subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Suddenly the rhythm of the narrative changes to lively allegro. The impressions are fresh and colorful. They are those experienced by Zamfirescu in his recent tour through Transylvania.

Alexandru is in the first place taken by his wife to Sibiu. The first surprise: everybody knows Romanian, and yet none of the notices in the train are written in Romanian.[19]

The young people put up at the "Römischer Kaiser" Hotel. On the street, in the restaurant, and at the station Romanian is to be heard, but a Romanian full of curious expressions. Here too Zamfirescu with a touch of irony immediately attacks the problem of Transylvanian Romanian speech as codified by the Latinist grammarians. On innumerable occasions Zamfirescu protested against the "Latinist excesses" of the Transylvanians. "We must leave our descendants a language in which they can move freely, the living language of our speech, without dead expressions or dialectal curiosities."[20] The same view was developed in his article "*Românul şi limba română*" (The Romanian and the Romanian Language) and in "*Literatura românească şi scriitorii transilvăneni*" (Romanian Literature and the Transylvanian Writers), in which he bitterly and in part unjustly criticized Slavici, for personal reasons. His idea, however, was valid, namely that what was important was "mutual intelligibility between all Romanians," and so a "classical" language. It is precisely the sphere in which his own contribution was of primary importance. Zamfirescu was right, even if the language of Creangă or Sadoveanu who used—but *artistically*—peasant or local expressions, seems to give him the lie, and even if his own positions were often limited or passionate, in line with his temperament.

Alexandru and Mia pay the indispensable visit to the metropolitan of Sibiu. "That's how things are with us; our national life is bound up with the church," says Mia to her husband. It is common knowledge how important the church's role was in the national life of the Transylvanian Romanians. Orthodox and Uniates alike maintained the national consciousness in the foreign milieu of Transylvania. Comparison may be made with the role of the Orthodox church in Greece. The priests in Transylvania were militant for a national idea. Alexandru's impression is that "on the surface were the foreigners, Saxons, Hungarians and Jews, while at the foundation were the native populations, the Romanians, who were resolutely and silently spreading and reconquering the land." Such nationalist statements must be put into the context of the time, in which the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a patchwork of nationalities who had awakened in the nineteenth century and for whom the national consciousness was something vital.

After Sibiu the young couple go to Selişte in the heart of ancestral Dacia. Selişte is one of the typical Romanian villages of Transylvania and is known as "the village of beautiful wives." Alexandru is struck by the curious names of the people. Peasant surnames are joined with Latin forenames chosen purposely so that they cannot be Magyarized in accordance with the policy of the Magyar state. Here follows the scene with the child Ionică Blestematu, who acts as guide to Comăneşteanu. Instinctively Ionică never replies directly to questions but with the characteristic peasant mistrust and prudence replies by means of a question. The dialogue is lively and touched with humor.

At Selişte Alexandru Comăneşteanu, "the gentleman from beyond the mountains," makes the acquaintance of the local intellectuals. It is known that Zamfirescu drew his inspiration for them from real persons. Here appears the splendid figure of the notary Zgurea—a picturesque bachelor and at the same time a typical Transylvanian village intellectual. The notary's moral authority ranks with that of the protopope and the schoolmaster. The protopope Marcu Stamate—Mia's uncle—is another cultural pillar of the Romanians in Selişte, as is his wife Lena, whose speciality as a housewife is "*pici de raţă pe crautǎ*" (in other words, "*pui de raţă pe varză*," duckling on cabbage). In Selişte Mia dresses in national costume. In the protopope's house everything is in Romanian style. In the drawing room stands the bust of I. C. Brătianu because he had supported the national movement in Transylvania, and an entire library of Romanian books—everything that had been published in the Kingdom of Romania up till then (1901). One feels that the picture is taken from life.

In the carriage on the way to the village of Poiana the notary pulls up with Alexandru and Mia on a hill called "Dealul Dorului" (The Hill of Longing), from which Alexandru has a splendid view of Transylvania. The notary explains to him how the people live from sheep-rearing as shepherds have lived from the start of time. The idea that the origin of the Romanians is to be found here in the mountains of Transylvania excites Alexandru (alias Zamfirescu) and so we find amid the lively and realistic conversation of the notary bravura pieces to which Zamfirescu was inspired by his vision of the Romanian past: a nation of "silent and patient" shepherds able to traverse history driving their sheep before them through the Carpathian mountains.

These shepherds Alexandru sees with his own eyes in the church at Poiana.

Sturdy, clean, with their arms propped on their staves, with their white tresses, the men were standing erect, listening to the holy liturgy. From the

flowered jackets hanging on their shoulders to the strong shoes rising at the toe like a ship's prow, all was new, white as snow. From the turned back sleeve of the shirt emerged sinewy arms, whirling through the air with an ample movement as they made the sign of the cross.

Zamfirescu pins down their image admirably—"with their belts like a fortress round their waist." Of similar workmanship is the description of the *horă* (round dance) at Poiana and of the local dance called *învîrtita*, in which "the girls seemed to hang from the lads like the branches of a robinia in flower from its trunk."

Into the mouth of the notary Zgurea is put Zamfirescu's most bitter criticism of the political maneuvering and corruption in the Kingdom of Romania. Clearly at this point the notary, despite his Transylvanian turn of speech, which is excellently caught by the author, is contributing the "guide-lines" for morals in the Kingdom. Here is the Kingdom seen from the angle of Transylvanian critics. In reality the critical vision is that of Zamfirescu himself.

The incident of the Hungarian gendarmes who come to take the priest for interrogation is drawn from life and has an air of reportage. After the service at Poiana the priest has appealed to the community for money contributions toward paying the fine to which a nationalist paper has been sentenced, with suspension as the alternative. The priest who has collected the money is removed by the gendarmes before the eyes of his people, who keep silent, illustrating the age-old passivity of the Romanians. Alexandru Comăneşteanu is indignant and when in the pushing one of the gendarmes treads on his foot, he is about to raise his arm against him, but for the notary Zgurea signing to him to control himself. However Alexandru utters imprudent words to the gendarmes, for which he has presently to pay. Back at Selişte he is arrested for insulting the public authority.

This didactic novel concludes with the advice (the "guide-line") of Father Lupu to his daughter: "Go in health to free Romania, learn to love it, be honest and economical, for that's what they need there."

Îndreptări appeared in Nicolae Petraşcu's review *Literatura şi arta română* from September 1901 to January-June 1902. It is the first large-scale work that Zamfirescu published elsewhere than in *Convorbiri literare*. But he had regularly published verse and short prose pieces in *Literatura şi arta română*. To Maiorescu, who found it hard to hide his annoyance at the publication in another review, Zamfirescu presented an argument difficult to refute, namely that the novel contained pages of glowing praise of that master of Romanian criticism who directed *Convorbiri literare*.

That the giving of "guidance" to the Romanians was a leitmotif in Zamfirescu's interests is proved by a significant fact. In 1918 it was he who proposed for the newspapers of the political group formed around Averescu the title *Îndreptarea*; its literary supplement was called *Îndreptarea literară*. In October 1918 Zamfirescu wrote these moving words in Averescu's paper:

Îndreptarea is not only the name of a newspaper but a word of prophetic meaning. . . . For the thirty years since I started to write, it has been my business to turn the hearts of the Romanians toward love of their country and the achievement of the national ideal. . . . I have been dreaming of a Great Romania since I was young.[21]

Probably that is how the work *Îndreptări* should be viewed: in the light of prophecy issuing from a man with a mission to his nation.

If we reflect that Zamfirescu was against tendentious art, not merely in theory, but especially in his own best creations, then we must admit that his passion for Romania and his inclination for social moralizing set him at odds with his artistic nature. Insofar as *Îndreptări* completes the portrait of a writer of Zamfirescu's quality, it deserves the reader's attention. Its subtitle might be "Contradictions and Dissociations."

III Anna *or What Cannot Be*

Although *Anna* passes as the last novel of the Comăneşteanu family, nothing recalls the social fresco of *Viaţa la ţară* apart from a genealogical connection and Zamfirescu's assertion that he wished to make Alexandru Comăneşteanu the hero of the conquest of Transylvania.

In a *fin de siècle* atmosphere in Bucharest the handsome captain Alexandru Comăneşteanu, the son of Saşa and Matei Damian, is loved by women. Married to the faithful Porţia-Mia, the young man is jealously loved by Anna Villara, the woman who as a young girl has been loved by his uncle Mihai Comăneşteanu, killed in the 1877 war. He is made a fuss of by Princess Smaranda Dudescu and loved by Berta, the pianist-singer, a woman of "easy virtue," herself the mistress of Anna's husband, General Villara. Another who loves him is the beautiful Urania Vucos, a Greek, wife of a banker. With her he slips off to Sinaia, pursued by Anna and Berta, both jealous. At the end of the novel it emerges that even the virtuous Elena Milescu, the widow of the hero of Grivitza, conceals in her heart an affection for

Saşa's son, her attitude to him being that of a white-haired, warm-hearted aunt. Natalia Canta also reappears in the novel; she is now a respected lady who busies herself with her estates and helps the peasants in the spirit of a patriarchal socialism by creating at her country place workshops, a school, an infirmary, as was the custom of certain boyars whom today we should call "progressive."

Thus the Comăneşteanu cycle ends with a society novel, the scenes of which take place in Bucharest drawing rooms of "La Belle Époque." The story begins with a dinner in the house of Anna Villara, during which the female characters are presented: Urania finished and elegant "with the truly elegant woman's style of dress, which makes everything she wears seem to be in its place"; Smaranda Dudescu is of more mature years, "superficial, generous, a good-hearted Romanian woman," who keeps open house and loves literature and young men; Porţia-Mia, the daughter of the Transylvanian priest, wife of Alexandru Comăneşteanu, devoted, serious, a good administrator of the estates which she looks after while the captain lives his professional life at Bucharest between barracks and drawing rooms; Elena Milescu, "poetic and gentle," is the true pattern of a superior woman in the author's eyes. The males, apart from the captain, are the two husbands: the Greek banker and General Villara, the one a parvenu, the other a pleasure-seeking and sensual man who deceives his wife unblushingly. There is another female character, who appears briefly but is well caught in a few sentences; she is the wife of the colonel, Captain Comăneşteanu's commanding officer, and Alexandru makes love to her in a scene which takes place in a confectioner's. The colonel's wife, "wasp-waisted, her bosom covered with flowers, had the unseemly gracefulness of pampered women."

The novel consists almost entirely of the visits which Alexandru makes by carriage to the different ladies. The visit to Berta with General Villara, during which Berta is vanquished by the young man's charm, ends in an absurd and pathetic duel; the German violinist who is hopelessly in love with the abandoned but talented woman is jealous of Comăneşteanu and challenges him. There is the visit to Smaranda Dudescu, who, with the boldness and cynicism of her age, pumps him about his different successes and liaisons—although we never at any time know for sure whether Alexandru has them all as mistresses! Elena Milescu treats him differently, with affection and perspicacity. "Your uncle had the soul of a hero. What sort of soul have you?" she asks him, and it is she who gives the answer, with tender indulgence, "The soul of a naughty boy," and

talks to him about the importance of the national ideal, the conquest of Transylvania. For this ideal everything must be sacrificed: "Let us give all that we have, because we have much more than we need. Let us give our estates, let us sell our jewels, our horses, the trifles which intoxicate us and stifle us." After the young man's departure follows the scene in which Elena Milescu in front of the mirror lets down her hair, sees that it is all white, and feels within her a longing for youth, a hidden desire for a young man, for "depravity." She controls herself by seeking refuge in a volume of Leopardi, in his sad and splendid verses: "*Torna dinanzi al mio pensier talora / Il tuo sembiante, Aspasia.*"

Alexandru's visits cross with those of Anna. Gnawed by jealousy, Anna wants to meet Berta, whom Alexandru has met; she wants to set eyes on Porţia-Mia and to follow the captain, being convinced that he deceives her at every step. In a moment of blind jealousy Anna undertakes a journey with Berta to Sinaia, the resort to which Alexandru and Urania have slipped away. The scenes consist of conversations in the drawing room or in the carriage. The tone of repartee alternates with moral and philosophical reflections on happiness or love and with erotic moments, embraces, stolen kisses, and daring gestures which bear the mark of the epoch, such as the uncovering of an ankle, the raising of a veil, the scent of perfume used by the women and even by the captain. All these things formed part of the erotic arsenal of the time. But they brought a new note into Romanian literature.

In *Anna* Zamfirescu had a purpose in view. He wants to illustrate the impossibility of happiness in love, because each person is looking for an unattainable ideal. Alexandru Comăneşteanu, the handsome officer run after by women, and the ladies among whom he shares his time, are all unhappy except for the cynics. Alexandru, "spoiled child of fortune," suffers from the oppressiveness of his life, the obligation "to appear the same, to pay visits, to seem happy. . . ." For Anna love is betrayal, and the pain which she suffers every moment takes on the proportions of a universal pain:

> Our souls are unfathomable. Berta was the abyss; she was almost an ideal necessity which only became suffering in its physical expression. In fact, when she thought of Berta's arms and breast, Anna would lose her calm. In other words, her jealousy was in essence animality. But her love?

It would seem that Zamfirescu set out to write a novel about passion and free love. In particular, he states in the preface that the

novel "is not written for ladies with morals or for men with principles." And yet Anna failed to be a novel of passion. Between women in love with the same man you would expect outbursts or scenes of violence; but no. The expression of feelings remains at the level of social conventions, or at pessimistic effusions, regrets, impulsive outbreaks followed by reconciliations. Anna in her jealousy ought to try to destroy Berta. Instead she ends by embracing her! What does Urania do at the height of a happiness probably fulfilled at Sinaia? She tries to throw herself into an abyss filled with snow! From lack of creative power but also from the idealist creed which he had made for himself Zamfirescu made sacrifices to an abstract vision of love. The supremacy of the ideal world over the real one was a conception to which Zamfirescu sacrificed much of his creative talent. No doubt the influence of Maiorescu's ideas about art explains this attraction for the classic ideal.

In *Anna* generalizations damage both the characters and the novel itself. There is a scene in the novel in which Anna looks at a photograph of her beloved. As she looks at the photograph she transposes the image of the beloved into an unreal world, the world of "what cannot be," of the impossible:

> Anna turned and her eyes fell upon a portrait. She looked at it from a distance, then she took a step toward the table: it was the captain's portrait. Anna seemed to be thinking of something. For a long time she looked beyond the cardboard. She was seeing him in an ideal world, cured in her fancy of all his aspirations toward other women and somehow confirmed in the one aspiration toward her. She felt for a moment like smiling. A boundless freedom: how would the captain have been if he had not run after too many women? Who knows? . . . Anna thought with a start of her love. It was not animality. It was something unique, profound and personal; a harmonious vibration of the individuality, which sometimes attains to standing on its own, having no connection with the outside world and so with the beloved.

A novel of the idealization of love, *Anna* becomes the picture of impotence—of renunciation or inability to live passionately. This agrees with Zamfirescu's description of a world whose enemies were "boredom and weariness with life." A sort of existential impotence, an oppressiveness close to the death wish, floats over this world. Pessimism, disgust—they make us think of the theories of Schopenhauer, whose influence upon Romanian writers at the end of the last century was due to Maiorescu himself. But the lack of will, the apathy which oppresses the characters as soon as they transcend the superficial plane of amorous intrigues, is something different. Broadly speaking, *Anna* is an academic novel, and therefore condemned—and yet Zamfirescu did not make a complete failure of it. There are many moments when suddenly life breaks into the artificial light of the workshop, moments when the novel lives because of the sensibility of the artist, who sets artifice aside and catches a living likeness.

The first scene provides an example. Alexandru comes unexpectedly to Anna. Then Anna,

> without waiting for a reply lured him into the shadow of the door, put her arms round his waist and laid her cheek against his breast, his straps and brass, the cloth of his tunic, whose smell of the cold weather outside mingled vaguely with the scent of his living body.

In the scene of the visit to Porţia-Mia, the captain's wife, Anna sees their child asleep. A hitherto unfamiliar feeling urges her toward it: "Anna felt a warm thrill run through her, an irresistible desire to kiss the white flesh of the child's arms." And in the scene at Sinaia, Zamfirescu recovers his gift as a landscapist when he describes the mountains in winter:

> It was a winter afternoon at Sinaia. The weather was mild. It had snowed recently, so that all the roads, paths and tracks seemed covered with a layer of down. The giant firs could scarcely bear the weight of snow on their branches, greenish below as the depths of waters, white above as their foam, the trunks plastered on one side with hoarfrost to which clung the flakes that had fallen then, while on the other they were furrowed by the cold.

Strokes such as these, springing from the sensibility of the artist who catches the sensation directly, are very modern.

In *Anna* the conventional is mingled with flashes of inspiration. The final result is negative, and yet things are not simple. Condemnation on the charge of academicism requires continual extenuation. In his curious, self-contradictory preface, Zamfirescu declares that the novel is written for sensitive women, who will forgive each of the female characters her weaknesses, because these characters are sincere. In reality *Anna* presents a paradox as regards the feminine heart which was Zamfirescu's favorite subject. Of all the female characters in *Anna* not one is a creation, while all taken together are so; Anna with her jealousy, Porţia-Mia with her faithfulness, Urania with her finesse, Smaranda and Elena with their experience of life, together compose an ethereal person. Not a woman, but the idea of woman. We are far from the great creation of Saşa Comăneşteanu—but close to the eternal feminine.

For all its weaknesses, *Anna, sau Ceea ce nu se poate* was classed by contemporary critics as marking a stage in the development of the Romanian novel in the period when it appeared, just as today in the corners of some of its academically rendered scenes we discover the signs of a hitherto unexploited aesthetic. *Anna* came out slowly, the first part in 1906, the second in 1911, in *Convorbiri literare*. In July 1906 Zamfirescu wrote to Maiorescu saying that *Anna* was becoming "a universal kissing" and adding that the hero, who in the next novel would annex Transylvania, was "a young rascal who is at present taking all the skirts by storm." [22] One cannot tell what would have happened to Alexandru Comăneşteanu, for the final novel remained unwritten. Zamfirescu also left eight pages of an autobiographical novel entitled *Romanul Deduleştilor* (The Novel of the Dedulescus), which takes place at his vineyard at Faraoane. The style proclaims a new "life in the country," transferred to the beginning of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 4

Novels, III: Lydda—Scrisori romane

WITH *În război* Zamfirescu had the feeling that he had finished a cycle: "This will be the third and last from the world of *Viaţa la ţară*." [1] Around 1900 a need for personal orientation, ethic, or philosophy drove him to write something utterly different from the Comăneşteanu novels: *Lydda—Scrisori romane* (Lydda, Roman Letters), a philosophical novel in epistolary form. To Maiorescu the author wrote in August 1899: "The whole of my present life is governed by the ideas expressed in the first part of *Scrisori romane*; these "Guidelines" have calmed me and settled me down to live out the rest of my days. At least that's what I believe." [2]

The book was begun in summer 1898 at Tivoli near Rome, where Zamfirescu wrote his novel *Îndreptări*, the short stories "*Furfanţo*," and "*Spre Coteşti*" (At Coteşti), some poems—*Poezii nouă* (New Poems), and his article against Slavici, "*Literatura română si Scriitorii ardeleni*" (Romanian Literature and the Transylvanian Writers).

Lydda—scrisori romane is a work unique among Zamfirescu's writings—the only one with a Roman subject—and a book of which he thought highly. This is surely because he put into it, as he used to say, "a powerful and decisive conviction, as a guide-line of life." Literary history has established that the Roman letters in the first part of the book, between the young Mircea M. and the old Filip A., show clear analogies with the real correspondence between author and critic. Mircea M. discusses from Rome with his friend Filip A. in Romania philosophy, morals, and literature; the subjects which Zamfirescu and Maiorescu discussed, when they met or by correspondence, appear in the novel.

Maiorescu, who was directly concerned, did not appreciate the first part of *Lydda* when it was sent for publication in *Convorbiri literare* in autumn 1898. It is clear from later letters that Maiorescu did not like the second part either, the part which contains "old Filip's notes," which are actually a number of maxims to which

Zamfirescu was much attached. The opinion of Maiorescu can be deduced from a letter of Zamfirescu's:

> Your remark was like the echo of my own doubt: "Why do you, a writer of poetry and novels, start bothering people with such tiresome things?" [3]

Maiorescu had not enjoyed the philosophical digressions, rightly considering the creative talent of Zamfirescu to lie elsewhere.

Lydda illustrates his temptation at that time to philosophize and moralize. On the other hand the "Roman Letters" correspond to a stage in the development of relations between Maiorescu and Zamfirescu. The correspondence published long after their death reveals facts of a personal kind and undercurrents of literary life which influenced their relationship. Zamfirescu was forty in 1898 and he was a writer of the front rank, perhaps the most famous novelist of the moment, as all the critics bear witness. The maxims contained in Part II of the book under the title "The Right Measure of Life" obviously have in his eyes a very important personal aim,[4] and so do the philosophical digressions in the novel. In spite of the sincere admiration for Maiorescu which endured throughout his life and which he showed to the end in his correspondence, Zamfirescu kept his distance from the writer's views. Beneath the same unfailing politeness the tone of Zamfirescu's letters to Maiorescu around 1898–1900 is more peremptory. Zamfirescu shows himself more touchy and more ready to give advice to other people.

In his turn Maiorescu found it hard to adjust himself to the "betrayal" of the younger Junimists. He was aware of the good relations between Zamfirescu and the group led by Nicolae Petraşcu, called "The Friends of Romanian Literature and Art." The fact is that *Lydda* is rooted in the reality of those years when the relations between the two men were secretly developing to the point where in 1909 a dramatic rupture was to take place.

In the first part the two correspondents send their letters between Rome and the estate of Costieni. In the second part the old man Filip keeps his diary. Between Mircea and Filip is an extremely unreal heroine, Lydda. The miscellaneous content of the letters in the first part is justified by the epistolary form: travel notes, description of scenery, philosophical or literary considerations, news of the love affair between Mircea and Lydda.

In the first part the allusions to Maiorescu seem today transparent. Like Maiorescu Filip feels that he is growing old. He imparts to Mircea (of whom in the end we learn that he was in fact Filip's natural son) his ideas about life. In old age Filip has become a skeptic. He is an idealist, a philosopher of the Schopenhauer school—another clear allusion to Maiorescu, who had presented Schopenhauer to the Romanian public. Politics in Romania are criticized by Filip. Politicians are men with "only vague ideas" or who "remain superficial in their assimilation of new ideas." Such assertions are in line with those of Maiorescu in his course of logic given at the University of Jassy in 1876.

Mircea, a young man traveling about Europe for purposes of study, is established for a time at Rome. He has immense respect for Filip. "You are right in everything you write to me, and I could say in advance that you will always be right in my eyes. It is enough for me to see your writing to be convinced." This is the very tone of Zamfirescu himself in his letters when he declares his boundless admiration for the critic Maiorescu. Mircea knows that he himself is not equipped for philosophical argument. He admits it with deference, but also with a certain malice, inasmuch as he ventures nonetheless to present his own ideas, and indeed does so in quite an offhand way. Projected in the person of Mircea, the amateurism becomes plausible. Thus, hidden behind the screen of literature, Zamfirescu permits himself an uninhibited dialogue with Maiorescu. When Mircea writes to Filip, excusing himself for not being able to find a sufficiently "masterly form" for presenting his ideas, irony is obviously directed at the elderly critic for his "masterly" system. In another place Filip pedantically takes Mircea to task. Replying to a long philosophical digression by Mircea, Filip writes, "Allow me to make two observations, one of form and the other about method of argument" and upbraids him in a peremptory tone for misuse of learned words and for lack of method in argument. Here again is obvious parody. So the plan of *Lydda* implies a sort of plot by a younger writer against a master with whom he maintains relations of enthusiastic admiration, but from whom he is beginning to move away, while preserving the same forms of respect. This procedure imposed on Maiorescu a sort of complicity—which could not fail to leave traces on the psychological relations between them. Mircea is a Spinozan or Cartesian freethinker, a rationalist who bears a close resemblance to Zamfirescu at the age of forty; Mircea believes in science and makes geometrical demonstrations in order to arrive at positivist-optimist conclusions. One can glimpse in Zamfirescu a certain fascination with nineteenth-century positivism under the influence of fashionable reading.

Apart from the hidden polemic between writer and critic Zamfires-

cu has put into this novel a philosophy of life which is illustrated by the three characters in turn. Zamfirescu is both Mircea and Filip, as he is also Lydda. Mircea has constructed a system which allows him to accept "the world as it is." A believer in vital equilibrium, he takes up the defense of optimism and "good sense": "He who minds his own business honestly . . . and is a man of his time, is the true element on which the future is being built." It is an Emersonian philosophy professed by a man in equilibrium and without excessive outbursts, though Filip suspects him of excesses of passion in his love for Lydda.

Filip, on the other hand, speculates on the cultivation of reason, of lucid willpower, of moral character. The cult of perfection is approached through the intellect in the Platonic way. Its embodiment in a human being on the classic model is possible. The individual dreamed of by the old man might be Mircea himself, that is, his own son.

The appearance of Lydda was necessary to the two men. Love polarizes their abstract ideas, gives a content to their discussions, and becomes in fact the central argument of the plot. Lydda is a young English painter, the daughter of a British press correspondent in Rome. Her traits of character are supposed to make her a modern creature; she is independent, emancipated as in those days only a woman from the land of John Stuart Mill could be, and implicitly a forceful character. Mircea describes her in romantic terms to his friend. At her first appearance, amid the ruins of the Roman Forum, he compares her to "a white snowflake falling from the air on a spring day quiet and calm. . . . " Their walks through the ruins of the Palatine and to the Capitoline museum take up many pages, which come straight from Zamfirescu's notebooks. Presently, as Filip feared, "the Englishwoman takes the place of the Madonnas and the Capitoline Venus."

The theme of love and art at the center of these "Roman letters" is a theme dear to Zamfirescu. "Woman," declares Filip, "is the incarnation of sensuality and egotism"; "moral character does not and cannot exist" in her. She cannot become "a thinker on the highest level." Filip's misogyny, as a character trait, is an invention of Zamfirescu; neither Maiorescu nor he himself were misogynists—quite the contrary! But the theme of woman in society, in politics, and in art was under discussion at the time. The arguments concerning John Stuart Mill transport one into the atmosphere of the period when in Romania Sofia Nădejde, the wife of the Socialist Ioan Nădejde of *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), was for the first time launching the fashion for suffragettes.

In reality the antifeminism flaunted by Filip (women in history, he says, are like "an electoral college of uneducated persons") has a deeper explanation. Filip is against the passions because "internal freedom is the only good on earth, and only men without passions can acquire it." The Platonic creed, the projection of reality into an idea or an image which is truer than reality, expresses Zamfirescu's own profession of faith.

Seen from this point of view *Lydda* contains a message, and no doubt that is the reason why its author had a weakness for this story. Its philosophical message is hidden in the discussion on several levels of this aspiration of Zamfirescu's toward the "ideal" or "ideality," to use his pet term. Thus Mircea's reaction before the ruins of the Palatine reflects one of the facets of this Zamfirescian aspiration, from which sprang his classicizing, neo-Parnassian poems of the period. "A gentle despondency fills you. The working together of the senses which gives me these impressions, ceases, and in my soul a self-sufficient ideal world is created." When, after Mircea's death, Filip comes to Rome to meet Lydda and take her with him to Romania, he has the revelation of the one thing which is "great and deathless: *la santa poesia*," which transfigures the world.

With Lydda Filip has long learned conversations about Keats, Shelley, and Plato. When Lydda, speaking of Shelley's poetry, declares that "beauty is not created to inspire poems but to elevate the soul to better times," it is the idealist persona of Zamfirescu speaking. So it is when Filip explains to Lydda the supreme aspiration of mankind: "a continual exaltation toward the abstract."

In reality the epistolary form of *Lydda* is a double pretext. Beyond the underground polemic with Maiorescu, the writer and man is debating with himself about his philosophy of life. The maxims, drawn directly from Zamfirescu's jottings, are precepts for practical conduct, inspired from experience of life in the form of aphorisms and reflections. Here without doubt are seen the contradictions between the practical rationalism, a sort of materialism composed of good sense and balance—or in another pet expression, "*cuminţenie*"—and the illusionary idealism in Zamfirescu's nature. The fictional element in *Lydda* is unfortunately conventional. The characters are confused with the ideas to which they give utterance, and when they descend from the plane of ideas to that of reality, their real life is rendered with a few conventional signs. Admittedly the psychological "tone" is correct, as always in Zamfirescu, but the figures remain outlines. Lydda seems today an unreal creation, lacking in depth, improbable. And yet Zamfirescu had great hopes for her. Of Lydda's personality

he wrote these revealing words: "I had put much aspiration into creating this type of woman. *To idealize in the real world by creating living and possible types, seems to me the highest form of art.*" [5] It is a sentence which might be considered his aesthetic creed as a novelist.

What a curious thing! Zamfirescu had already written *Viaţa la ţară* and *Tănase Scatiu* and the best of his realist tales, when the lure of idealism made him think that Lydda could measure up to Saşa Comăneşteanu! The creative writer of fiction was the other Duiliu Zamfirescu, the novelist of realism in a Romanian setting. If *Lydda* is viable, it is not for the character or the setting, but for the language. One example will illustrate the sunset light which bathes some pages— a *fin de siècle* light filtered through the sensibility of the poet of language, in keeping with the period and the eternal romantic melancholy by which Zamfirescu remained overcast, once he had passed from the strong sunlight of *Viaţa la ţară*:

> The nights passed, long and full of thoughts. The moon rose late. It was long since I had watched the spectacle of nature and hours like these. From my window could be seen in the east a vague expanse of ghostly light. Against the horizon the clouds were moving in disorder, shapes of terror which it slowly absorbed beneath flames as of a fire. The whole sky was filled with unrest. The tops of the trees began to be seen emerging from the thick darkness. A light wind passed through the branches, sending shudders through the veins of the leaves which seemed as on poplars to sway of their own accord. Then suddenly the moon appeared, like a dead giant, rising from the void for the Last Judgment.

CHAPTER 5

Short Stories; Memoirs

THE short stories first appeared in magazines, the great majority in *Convorbiri literare*. After that Zamfirescu collected them in volumes: *Fără titlu* (No Title), 1883; *Novele* (Short Stories), 1888; *Novele romane. Frica* (Roman Short Stories; Fear), 1895; *Furfanţo, Trei novele* (Furfanţo, Three Short Stories), 1911; *O muză* (A Muse), 1922. Apart from the volume *Novele* of 1888, each is a heterogeneous collection of pieces. In the latest edition of Zamfirescu's works, edited by M. Gafiţa, the short stories from these volumes together with sketches which had remained unreprinted cover about 700 pages.

Zamfirescu was an excellent short-story writer, so much so that some critics have regretted that he did not persist in the genre whose brevity suited his talent. Zamfirescu's short prose is striking in the variety of categories in which he wrote, as if he wanted to try them all without tying himself to any one: the reporter sketch, the essay sketch, the poetic sketch, and short stories psychological, autobiographical, satirical, and allegorical. In fact Zamfirescu made his prose debut as a writer of sketches and short stories in *România liberă*, on which he served from 1880 to 1884. At that time his prose was romantic and sometimes sentimental, influenced by French writers such as Octave Feuillet. He himself rejected most of his early prose together with neoromantic influences. All the same, there are among these pieces certain delightful pages, in which the accents of Werther are combined with a plasticity of images directly descended from Théophile Gautier.

Amintiri din vremuri can serve as a model for the neoromantic formula of his first period. The subject in itself is typical. There are scenes from the fictionalized life of a minor Romanian, Depărăţeanu (1835–65), author of the volume *Doruri şi amoruri* (Longings and Loves), which was much to the taste of his contemporaries. It is interesting to note that other minor Romantics served him as a subject about this time, namely Nicoleanu and Hrisoverghi, just as

Johann Strauss and Weber inspired him in his early short stories. But besides the romantic fantasy, there are realistic pages in *Amintiri din vremuri*, usually picturesque descriptions.

As a matter of fact, it is in this short story that Zamfirescu makes a surprisingly unambiguous confession: "What I particularly like in prose is a picture. To draw by stages and to colour with words . . . is what can most surprise and kindle the imagination." Here is a passage where he conjures up the Bucharest of Cuza's time (1859–66). It is really the Bucharest of Zamfirescu's youth, supplemented by some memories and perhaps some engravings made ten years earlier. The description dates from 1879, when Zamfirescu was twenty-one:

It was December. Bucharest was swimming in a sea of mud mingled with snow, which made the movement of carriages almost dangerous. On Podul Mogoşoaiei you could see long series of pot-bellied coupés passing in procession, with their rusty S-shaped springs, or longish carriages with the box skied high up in the air, and with two crossed straps behind, which gave them the look of diplomats wearing sashes. All these carriages were going along, splashing the passers-by, to the Bossel Theatre, where an Italian company four times a week drew together all the smart society of our capital. In the light of the street-lamps and of lamps in windows, women could be seen alighting in the choicest attire, with four rows of coral on their head, their hair curled and lifted over their ears like great menacing screens, their dresses inflated and stiff enough to stand up on their own, with the bosom exposed or covered right up with a bodice—as one said in those days—à la Catherine de Médicis . . . These ladies, on the arms of gentlemen in check trousers tight around the ankle, climbed the stairs, talking a curious idiom, a mixture of Grecisms with Gallicisms and Latinisms, which was called Romanian. Here and there could be seen a privileged man dressed in the French taste or a woman who was a shining light among these dull and ridiculous dolls. When such women appeared, all free eyes and eyeglasses were turned upon them with wonder and often with scandalised looks at the introduction of a tighter or more low-cut dress.

Something else from this youthful period which can still be read with pleasure are the sketches from the time when he wrote the column "Palabras" in *România liberă*. They are short pieces, "portraits and types" which illustrate a world of minor intellectuals of the time when Bucharest already had its civil servants, poets, and journalists after the Western model, but in forms adapted to local circumstances. Zamfirescu makes fun of much the same world as we find in the sketches of Caragiale. The poet living wretchedly in a hovel on a vacant site, the old-time archivist, the member of parliament, the

editor of a Transylvanian newspaper, the usher from parliament, the ladies on a charity committee, the verger or the cobbler. In these portraits a detail taken from life fixes a human type. Mr. Gârgoreanu, the member of parliament, eats "harnessed to a napkin tied round his neck and looking with a certain melancholy at the vegetable soup which he is turning now to the right and now to the left to cool it. . . . " The notary Pandelachi, nicknamed "Marafet" (Airs and Graces), "goes along swaying like a wind-blown willow and making all sorts of grimaces" and has "a top hat which he only puts on when going into town. You meet him riding on a dark bay barb, with his top hat on his head and his trousers raised to his knees, galloping toward the county town, proud, stately and comic." The verger was noticed by Zamfirescu in youth at the church in Focşani. "The verger reads evensong with a candle under his nose and from time to time he bursts out with 'Lord have mercy' which, as it is repeated, fades away somewhere under the arches, unheard and uncomprehended. . . . " In these early pages there appear also scenes of Romanian provincial life of that time: memories from Dobrudja, and from Dealul Monastery, noted by him when a provincial magistrate.

The volume *Novele* of 1888 reveals the area of literature in which Zamfirescu wrote his most durable pages. He gradually abandoned the formula of the romantic short story and slowly changed his visual angle, abandoning lyrical fantasy and keeping to the line of realist prose. Undoubtedly Maiorescu played a part in this change of direction, starting from the very first story published in *Convorbiri literare*, entitled "*Noapte bună*" (Good Night). Zamfirescu read it to Maiorescu on the occasion of a meal *tête-à-tête*. Some years later he wrote: "I remember in particular a lunch on the terrace with just the two of us, at which you revealed yourself to me like the Lord on mount Sinai. . . ; my genuine liking and admiration for you dates from then." [1] Maiorescu liked the story very much. The remarks which he made were in the direction of limiting lyricism and the picturesque elements in favor of more precise touches. The story which Zamfirescu later considered "an attempt at poetry" is full of atmosphere and Oriental charm.

A young procurator—a flippant townsman—banished to Dobrudja falls momentarily in love with the beautiful Turkish girl Ayshe, whom he glimpsed as she "lay on a mattress spread on the verandah . . . and picked melilot with slim, lazy fingers." The description of the little Danube port where Greeks, Turks, Lipovans, and Romanians live together reproduces the Oriental atmosphere of Dobrudja:

In the shelter of the great cliffs, called *canarale*, on the right and left of Hîrşova there lie at anchor several Turkish barges, a caïque with grain, two Greek boats and a whole string of Lipovan lotcas which, drawn up on shore, have the air of carriages ranged in a row. The shade of masts and ropes spreads into the distance, inscribing on the surface of the water a complicated lacework which moves on the rounded swell like black lace on a full bosom.

The words *ceaim* (barge) and *caic* (caïque), of Turkish and *lotcă* of Russian origin, naturalized in Romanian, give the setting. The moving immobility of the Danube on a moonlit night suggests Oriental laziness.

There is an unspeakable charm in being awake while the Turks sleep, and the charm is especially great when the Turks sleep on the water, as at Hîrşova. On the bright surface of the Danube the moon spreads a path of silver, in whose glitter you would suppose all the stars of the sky to be trembling, if the great star of the night had not quenched them. A sparkling dust clings to each crinkle of wave and is carried downstream to plate all the water with silver, as far as the edge of the right bank, whose shadow draws a black border along the Danube. . . .

The neighborhood of the Danube has a charm which Zamfirescu felt and which always attracted him, as is shown by the many evocations of the Danube in his prose works. It was a symbolic affinity if we reflect that at the beginning and at the end of his life Zamfirescu lived near the Danube: at Hîrşova as a young procurator and later at Galatz as chairman of the Danube Commission.

The other tales relate incidents from the life of Romanian middle-class people. "*Locotenentul Sterie*" (Lieutenant Sterie), "*Conu Alecu Zăgănescu*" (Mr. Alecu Zăgănescu), and "*Subprefectul*" (The Subprefect) depict that Romanian provincial life which Zamfirescu was among the first to describe. Only after him came Sadoveanu, Brătescu-Voineşti, and I. A. Bassarabescu.

How well Zamfirescu knew the society of Romania, especially of Moldavia, emerges from the excellent story which has Conu Alecu Zăgănescu as its chief character. Here the writing, the vocabulary, and the characters harmonize perfectly, so that Zamfirescu attains a maximum of expressiveness and authenticity. Conu Alecu is an eccentric, a "penniless boyar" of Moldavian society. People like him existed until recently, especially in Moldavia: impoverished boyars, carefree and bohemian.

Conu Alecu lives in the country near the provincial town of Rîmnicul Sărat. His restless nature is heralded by a description of the locality, of the village clinging to a wild hillside in that part of the county toward the mountains, a district well known to the writer. The people are poor. "What little they earned in summer, scarcely sufficed to feed them until the season of nettles and sorrel." Conu Alecu lived in his parents' house, which, although of stone, "stayed standing by kind permission of the winds which passed it by without troubling it. . . . " As for Conu Alecu, nature had given him a "feckless spirit which went on its way through the world like a wheel without a properly adjusted axle, on a road in the Bărăgan—as though it were drunk." Conu Alecu is on the road all day in a rickety britzka, as he is a lawyer by profession. How many lawyers like him were in old Romania! He follows politics from the café in Rîmnicul Sărat or at home in the country by reading the conservative newspaper in which his candidate writes, a former liberal deputy who has turned conservative. The paper is also the reading-matter of Coana Marghioliţa, his elder sister and companion of his loneliness. She resembles her brother "apart from the fact that instead of a coat she wears a dress and instead of a beard some relentless furrows of age from which emerge here and there lonely, twisted tufts of hair. . . . " At home, Conu Alecu takes a turn through the yard or plays backgammon. The running of the estate is in the hands of Coana Marghioliţa. It is she too who manages the housekeeping, for their only servant is the coachman Avram ("broken-down as his carriage and spiritless as his nags"). Their house is full of old things which Zamfirescu describes with particular pleasure: a heavy oak table over which "there is everlastingly a thick white linen cloth," a walnut sofa "carved with all sorts of ornaments" but with springs like "clods behind the plough," and a cage with a cock blackbird who sings the first bars of the "Marseillaise."

Zamfirescu has a real partiality for characters like Conu Alecu Zăgănescu, lonely, restless, unambitious, who lead their bohemian lives in the provinces. In the aimless life of the two old people nothing happens—until the day when the priest Vasile, drunk, knocks at their door with a horse's nosebag round his neck. He brings them "in a greenish-yellow handkerchief" an illegitimate child to which his daughter has given birth. The fantastic reason which he insincerely offers is that Conu Alecu is the father! Zamfirescu had a pretty poor opinion of the morality of country priests, whom he considered uneducated and drunken. Vasile is a type of village priest from the Romanian background of those days as is Father Buză-tăiată in *Viaţa la ţară* and other priests in Zamfirescu's prose. The old people agree to bring the child up, and it changes their lives, and makes them happy. Zamfirescu depicts with tenderness their affection for the

child. He himself loved children and wrote moving pages about them in his stories and in the letters in which he mentions his own children. The indulgence of the old people toward the morality of the priest and toward the true father who comes to take his child back, their fatalism and attitude of humility based on acceptance of fate, throw a revealing light on Romanian provincial life of the past, a world which has much in common with the Slav world.

The story was read by Maiorescu in spring 1887 ("I have committed a new crime," Zamfirescu wrote to him). In his notes Maiorescu records himself as reading "Zamfirescu's new and pretty tale *Conu Alecu Zăgănescu*" to a restricted circle at a lunch which lasted till evening, at Iacob Negruzzi's. A month later it was published in *Convorbiri literare*.

Into "*Sub-Prefectul*" (*Convorbiri literare*, August 1887) Zamfirescu put a love story and a picture of society. The landed proprietor Maxenţian, a sort of Iago, avenges himself for the love affair between his wife Dadiana and the young subprefect. At another level the characters and the background foretell *Viaţa la ţară*. The subprefect is a character who frequently recurs in Zamfirescu's prose: the idealist intellectual, back from studies abroad, who wants to reform the state of affairs in the Romanian provinces and in particular the exploitation by the *ciocoi*. Such an upstart, a rich man who manipulates the county as he pleases and terrorizes his peasants, is Maxenţian. The little market town of Vlădeni with its petty officials, the mayor, the judge, and the telegraphist, and Maxenţian's estate are all described in realistic detail.

> When the stage-coach arrived twice a week, people came out to their hall doors in astonishment, and the cattle turned their heads toward the newcomer with that stupid oily look which comes from all large, lifeless eyes. Then there would be a certain amount of movement at Voinea's inn. The justice of the peace with his assistant or the deputy of the subprefecture and two or three rascally lawyers who were thrashing over the local lawsuits, rushed to the telegraphist: "Look, Dimiu, there's nothing for me . . ." "Friend Dimiu, give me my mail . . ." "My newspapers, brother Dimiu!" And brother Dimiu began to put on airs, so that you saw at once that at those moments he was the key man. If he had a grudge against anyone, he took his revenge: "Don't pester me, man! There's nothing for you! Or even if there is, wait for the postman to bring it to your house."
>
> If he had any bother with anyone between the two days on which the coach called, you would hear him muttering between his teeth: "Never mind, I'll show you when the coach comes. . . ."

Zamfirescu is equally realistic when he renders the speech of the peasant "who does not want to be the first to speak, even when he has something to say," and the misery of the shepherd shockingly beaten at Maxenţian's behest:

> On a cloak spread on the damp ground lay the shepherd with his eyes sunk in their sockets, his mouth hanging open, his face livid, with some leaves of plantain tied about his ears and thin twigs of rosemary round his mouth, like the dead; around him a swarm of midges kept up an irritating accompaniment, moving from head to foot and back again, without anyone chasing them away.

The character of Dadiana adds an artistic side to the story in which Zamfirescu was a master—in catching the nuances in the heart of a woman in whom love is sprouting. It is one of the directions in which Zamfirescu's art went furthest, culminating in the figure of Saşa Comăneşteanu. He had a predilection for this kind of heroine. Dadiana—like Matilda in the story "*Spre Mare*" (To the Sea), published in the volume *Novele* in 1888—is touched in with tiny strokes which make up her portrait and show a woman at the beginning of love. The words which describe Dadiana are chosen, like her name, to evoke her with a kind of tenderness. "What a likeness there is between the oval of Dadiana's face and her name!" the subprefect exclaims to himself. Dadiana's letter was written "with long, rather leisurely characters." She had "dark blue eyes, like lilac tips in rain." These feminine characters in Zamfirescu's prose, "charming by their vagueness," as Nicolae Manolescu says,[2] have rightly been compared to Turgenev's heroines.

Of the stories written in his Italian period and sent to *Convorbiri literare* the most remarkable is his short tale "*Spre Coteşti*" (To Coteşti), 1904, and included in the volume *Nuvele Romane* (Roman Stories), 1905. Its subject is Romanian and it was probably written on one of those trips to Romania which the author looked forward to so much. "*Spre Coteşti*" is a little masterpiece. Nowhere better than here can one find the emotion which bound Zamfirescu to the patriarchal atmosphere, to what he himself called "the charm of Romanian solitude," that is to say, of nature and people untouched by town life. The characters reflect Zamfirescu's sympathy for simple souls, in this case the uncle, the child, and the dog. It is a tale full of poetry and without sentimentality, because all the time it remains close to reality.

Conu Dumitrache takes his nephew Iancu, a child of eleven, with him in his carriage to his vineyard. Iancu is his favorite because he is like him; "he had a crooked nose and liked horses." Conu Dumitrache is a boyar, a bachelor who "had never achieved anything practical or married, or held a post or toiled to enrich himself or played any role in society. He had lived only for horses and hunting." Conu Dumitrache's idleness and bohemian ways link him to Conu Alecu Zăgănescu, the man with the "feckless spirit" and to other heroes in Zamfirescu's work.

The narrative is divided into little scenes or tableaux, in accordance with the author's favorite technique. The drive in the carriage, the quail shoot, the stopping at the Bulgarian gardeners', the arrival and dinner at the vineyard, the going to bed. What constitutes the charm? It is the naturalness of the happenings and the profound harmony between the language and what it expresses: the affection between uncle and nephew, their happiness during the carriage drive, the shoot and their dinner together. Zamfirescu is in his element in this patriarchal universe, in the midst of nature:

> They passed through the bed of the Milcov for some quarter of an hour. Here and there could be seen the gleam of a splash of water, around which flocks of geese were sleeping or naked children running, making dams.

The movements of the hunter are authentic:

> When they arrived near the spot where the quail had alighted, they stopped. Conu Dumitrache took from his pockets a red bag, from which hung the end of a bone, and began to make a noise with it exactly like the quail's "pit-palac." Very soon the real quail answered from the grass: "pit-palac! pit-palac!"

The emotions of the child are rendered with the finesse with which Zamfirescu analyzes the movements of the heart. Iancu is full of admiration for his uncle, who knows how to control horses. He who so far "had only driven chairs with reins of rag" decides "in his secret thoughts to drive the chairs on a shorter rein." When the moment of the shoot arrives, the uncle is overcome by his enthusiasm and goes off after his dog, leaving Iancu alone in the fields.

> Conu Dumitrache could now be seen floating above the crops like a scarecrow. He was shouting and swearing at the dog and moving away. The boy lay down in the stubble at the edge of the wheat.

After stopping at the market gardeners', where they buy peppers and cucumbers, they arrive at dusk at the uncle's house. The house is more like a tumble-down shack, but it has its amenities: a balcony in front and a little wooden tower on the roof. In the uncle's house (as in Conu Alecu Zăgănescu's) everything was "worn out and rickety"; no plate was like another, no fork had all its prongs, no knife was firm in its handle. For Conu Dumitrache such matters were "swank" even in town, much more in the country. He carried his dinner service with him in the shape of a formidable pocket-knife. The butler and the housekeeper must not be omitted from the picture. The housekeeper Ileana sends her husband running to the Greek shopkeeper for rice so that she can cook the quail pilaf.

The dialogues, true to life as always in Zamfirescu, enchant one by their humor and tenderness. The uncle has a joke by which he expresses his affection for the child in a clumsy way: he pulls Iancu's hair and asks him, "What does your hair smell of, man?" As they talk over the evening meal, Conu Dumitrache tells Iancu about the boyars of olden times and their ranks, about their forebear who was *comis* (a boyar of the second rank). The language is simple and suited to the child's understanding, but shows that Conu Dumitrache too has the ingenuous nature of a man who has lived in the patriarchal milieu. He is a man without spiritual complexities, whose only need is freedom to do as he pleases. He is a representative type of the Romanian world: the man who wants to do as he likes and nothing else. "*Spre Coteşti*" can stand beside *Viaţa la ţară* as a model of the writer's art.

Zamfirescu also cultivated another type of short piece, the "picture of manners" in continuation of the "types and portraits" of his youth. With the sketch "*Petrică*" (1905) we are again in the Romanian milieu, this time not in the country, but in an unfashionable quarter of Bucharest. The scenes take place in an eating-house and then in the wretched dwelling of a singer. The characters illustrate the intellectual and artistic Bohemia of 1880–90, which Zamfirescu knew when he was a journalist on *România liberă*. The drunkard Lachi Pavlov, alias Dibici Balalanschi, the journalist Năiţă Constantinescu, the poet Enăchiţă Profiriu, the critic Barbieri, the tenor Marţac, and a young patron, Petre Văleanu, were based on real people. With vulgar sensuality these men let themselves go as they drink. (It is in this same way, but without the saving grace of talent and critical sense, that Tănase Scatiu enjoys himself.) The language creates the typical atmosphere: the men in their cups swear at one another, then kiss, and when the tenor Marţac sings a sentimental ballad (but sings it admirably), the emotions of the drunkards are expressed by Oriental sighing and sobbing. The scene is short but very colorful. Obviously

Zamfirescu knew this milieu intimately, and entered the "dangerous intimacy" of these "spendthrifts of energy," as he calls the men who are intellectually and artistically creative. When Maiorescu reproached Zamfirescu for excess of realism in the language, in other words for the swearwords uttered in thir cups, the writer refused to alter the text. He explained to Maiorescu that his intention was to present

> real men, in whom vice, talent and poetry fuse together to form the setting in which many Romanian writers of twenty-five years ago lived (Eminescu and Caragiale, to quote only the most famous), a setting into which I made my way and which you have never known at all.[3]

In the articles which he wrote after Eminescu's death, Caragiale imputed to Maiorescu this same ignorance of the reality in which the intellectual bohemians had lived. Zamfirescu's dialogue in such scenes can rival Caragiale's, with the difference that in Zamfirescu the ever present note of naturalism gives the text an implicitly moralizing sense, not found in Caragiale.

From the same series of "pictures of manners" it is worth mentioning the excellent sketch of "*La Buduiu*" (To Buduiu), 1911. On a day of blazing heat the priest and his wife with three other petty bourgeois couples, "well-to-do tanners, all electoral agents" from a quarter of Focşani, go to bathe in the stream named Buduiu. The characters have comic names—Şatraru, Ghemuleţ, Father Cristelniţă (so nicknamed because a font—*cristelniţă*—had been stolen from his church). The provincial petty bourgeoisie, immortalized by Caragiale, are here viewed with humor and smiling irony by Zamfirescu. We are present at the bathing of the ladies and the men, separated by a sheet, at a little scene of jealousy, at a picnic, at a slap dealt at the Jewish cabman. They are trifles, in which Zamfirescu uses his favorite device: the art of the live detail. After their bath

> the ladies, half unbuttoned, spread a rug in the shade by the Buduiu and began to take out the salted meat and roast chickens. The bottles of wine and mineral water were cooling under the water. First of all they each had some preserve from the hands of Mrs. Şatraru, who, being a person of delicacy, washed the spoon each time. The robinia-flower sherbet clung to the moustaches and to the spoon. Speranţa (Mrs. Şatraru) smiled at Ghemuleţ, looking at him meaningly and prolonging the rinsing of the spoon. He laughed vaguely, trying to seem a gay dog, but feeling bored. . . .

The characters talk the language of the *mahala*, at once vulgar and vigorous, with swearwords and malformations.

The Romanian sketches and stories have nothing in common with the fictionalized memories of his diplomatic days written after his return to Romania and gathered into three short stories in the volume *O muză*. Basing them on memories of his diplomatic life between 1888 and 1890, the writer evokes the atmosphere of society in Rome at the end of the century. The tone is slightly worldly, the conversations are quite commonplace. Titles and illustrious names heighten the drawing-room atmosphere. John James is a real person, an American diplomat, a lover of music and an extrovert, especially in his cups. Zamfirescu was enchanted with this type of romantic American. The story entitled "*John James*" describes the arrival at Rome of a rich man from Baltimore, from the generation of the Vanderbilts, "clinking with millions." His daughter, the beautiful Eveline, wreaks havoc in Roman society, but her heart is conquered by John James. Zamfirescu devotes many pages to the amorous adventures of his friend. He was much attached to this eccentric friend. When John James died on the Côte d'Azur after the First World War, Zamfirescu attended his burial. In *O muză* he describes a trip to Sorrento in the years when he and John James were young diplomats with social successes. The story describes the locality, the people of Naples, and, in contrast, the elegant world around the charming Donna Nicoletta Grazioli. In her presence the poet Ugo della Rovere is asked to tell a story to explain what is meant by "a muse." And the poet then tells of the love between a sick and rather neurotic girl and himself, the old poet. These fictionalized memoirs, written toward the end of his life, have an Old-World charm, due to the setting and the *fin de siècle* sensibility which emanates, perhaps without the author realizing it, from this world which was destined to vanish with the First World War, a world of leisurely gestures which spends its time in hotels and drawing rooms, a dated world whose antiquated adventures are saved only by the language in which they are told.

It is a pity that Zamfirescu did not persevere in one direction: the realistic story, or the story with a Romanian atmosphere. The explanation probably is that his stories long remained unknown to the great public, with the result that he did not feel encouraged. But it also lies in his own temperament. As a writer he was tempted by many sorts of experiments which he abandoned once he had tried them, passing on to something else. Today, the figure of Zamfirescu the story-writer has its place in Romanian short-story writing alongside of the best. The eminent critic Nicolae Manolescu declares:

> Literary history has in general ignored the value of his short stories. The comparison with Slavici and Caragiale has seemed to many overwhelming.

But though inferior from the point of view of creative power, Zamfirescu is remarkable as a story-writer. He is one of the first analysts of delicate, candid souls, an observer of strange psychologies and of the automatisms of senility and aboulia, being in this respect a pioneer. . . .[4]

Memoirs

The reminiscences in *O muză* are fictionalized reminiscences from the social life of a diplomat. Zamfirescu's real memoirs are to be found elsewhere, in the portraits of contemporaries begun in 1914, when the outbreak of the First World War spurred him to start a sort of review of the political scene in Romania. Unfortunately the project was never completed. His intention was to leave for posterity a series of portraits to be published after his death. The manuscript deposited at the Biblioteca Fundaţiilor Regale, now Biblioteca Centrală de Stat, was unknown until recently. The disclosure of some of these pages was made in an unexpected and paradoxical way, which had certainly not been in Zamfirescu's mind, in the columns of a popularizing review of Marxist—but at the same time nationalist character—*Magazin Istoric* (Historical Magazine), for October 1973. Here were printed extracts from *Portrete 1914* (Portraits 1914), as the manuscript is entitled.[5]

The motive for publication in *Magazin Istoric* is clearly of a political nature, as is proved by the very choice of the extracts, from which some passages are missing and replaced by rows of dots. The "Portraits" contain pages of criticism of politicians of the time and critical judgments on the members of the royal family. As a matter of fact, Zamfirescu only lived to write six "portraits" and to recount the so-called "Drama of Venice." This is the banishment of Queen Elizabeth (Carmen Sylva) to Venice in the summer of 1891, because she had supported the plan of betrothing Prince Ferdinand, the heir to the throne, to Elena Văcărescu, her maid of honor and daughter of the former Romanian Minister at Rome, Iancu Văcărescu, a plan which came up against the firm opposition of political circles and of the king himself. Elena Văcărescu lived more and more in France, where the part that she played in Parisian literary circles is well known. She was one of the last Romanian ladies with a literary salon in Paris, a poetess and lecturer, a rival in social success to Anna de Noailles—also a Romanian by origin, but much more Frenchified. Elena Văcărescu, the great-granddaughter of Enăchiţă Văcărescu, the poet of *Amarîta turturea* (The Moping Dove) always remained a fiery patriot.

Zamfirescu was unexpectedly involved in the romance of Prince

Ferdinand and Elena Văcărescu. In his capacity as a young secretary at the legation in Rome he was given the task of being at the disposal of Queen Elizabeth during her residence in Venice. In the memoirs which he began he described several scenes from the queen's entourage and his own conversations with her. Meanwhile the Romanian newspapers published a malicious report about the queen's exile and that of the Văcărescu family, signed with a pseudonym. Zamfirescu was accused of having written the report, which prompted notes from the ministry and counternotes of protest from the secretary of legation. The accusation was forcefully denied by Zamfirescu and to this day it is not known who was the author of the report.

It is a pity that Zamfirescu could not finish his gallery of portraits. The few pages that he left confirm his talent as portraitist which was apparent in his literary writing. With a pen that is caustic, biting, sometimes actually malignant, he delineates his enemies or reveals the weaknesses alongside the positive qualities of men whom he admires, but admires clear-sightedly. His vigorous phrases draw a portrait in a few strokes. His methods are graphic; it is the technique of the classical moralists' portrait with a "point." That the idea of memoirs engrossed him at this time is confirmed by the preface to the fourth edition of *Viaţa la ţară*, which dates from this same year, 1914. The preface is from beginning to end a melancholy recollection of the years that had passed since he wrote the novel at Brussels in 1894. It ends with the following statement: "As a moralist I should still have something to say. But sententious people are tiresome, and in literature, particularly, an author's greatest fault is to be boring." So he recognised in himself a moralizing vein—and he was right. He was a moralist who, far from being boring, would have been of great interest for the Romanian scene if he had carried out his intentions.

The portraits of the principal personages are interspersed with personal experiences, details actually observed or heard from immediate sources. Here are some examples. Take Dimitrie Sturdza, whom he detested, a portrait also found in the letters to Maiorescu.

> Sprung from the boyar family of the Sturdzas and consequently a Moldavian, this man has played a primary role, although of a second-rate intelligence. Brought up in Germany, kept strictly in check by his mother, religious to the point of bigotry, ridiculously prudish, he was in vivid contrast to almost all the politicians of his time—but for that very reason, interesting.

Here is P. P. Carp, the aged leader of the Conservative party, known as a great orator, but also as a man with a sharp tongue, a quality which marks him, says Zamfirescu, both for ill and for good.

For ill it shows him as an amateur, an artist who sacrifices a situation for a bon mot, an incorrigible scoffer; for good as a man in the full sense of the word, who thinks clearly and tells everyone, even His Majesty, what he thinks. From this point of view Mr. Carp is the most original of Romanians.

One side of this fine intellect is the gift of oratory. No flowers of rhetoric, nor the endless adjectives of Delavrancea, the grimaces and mimicry of Maiorescu, the rather empty brilliance of Take Ionescu—Mr. Carp's speeches are heard with pleasant astonishment and read with affection, like Mommsen's history. When he talks with his monocle in his eye, his bald head, his famous black bow tie and wearing his frock coat like a highborn Englishman, all hearts are conquered. The Moldavianisms of his oratorical style give him an extra charm.

At Ţibăneşti, his family estate, Mr. Carp provides hunting parties, dinners, drives through his woods which are maintained with German orderliness—wearing his monocle with that same intimate air of contempt which seems to say: "I tell you, my dear man, you're an ass!"

Here is the portrait of a lady who was in turn wife of Marghiloman, Carp's successor as Conservative leader, and of Ion Brătianu, leader of the Liberal party:

Mrs. Eliza Marghiloman (née Ştirbey) seemed destined by fate to be the wife of a party leader, in any case. I knew her both as Mrs. Marghiloman and as Mrs. Brătianu. I recall the first as an adorable person. Musset used to say of the Englishwoman in his poem *Une bonne fortune* that the best comparison he could make to her was a drop of milk. I should say of Mrs. Marghiloman that the best comparison is a peach, round, rosy and scented, with the down which deters nervy people from touching it. She was a fruit which thought, for she took an interest in poetry; she laughed like a flower that blooms; she attracted one like the bottom of deep waters. I knew her also as Mrs. Brătianu: the fruit was riper, the down more prickly, the laugh less frequent, the water less deep; instead her thought was elevated to ideal spheres of patriotism and poetry—I have read a work translated by her into the most beautiful Romanian.

Undoubtedly the portraits would have been an interesting document for that period which Zamfirescu watched from the front seats. It is not the only thing to be regretted about this writer who did not fulfill all his possibilities.

CHAPTER 6

Plays

ZAMFIRESCU'S relations with the theater only deserve to be mentioned from the point of view of literary history. In his career the theater was an aspiration, a passion—and unfortunately, an utter failure. In his youth he had been dramatic critic of *România liberă*. He had loved the stage and had himself made two attempts with *O suferinţă* (An Affliction), 1882, and *Prea tîrziu* (Too Late) 1884. The first was rejected, the second only performed once.

Between 1910 and 1915 Zamfirescu passed through a new phase of passion for the theater, of "dramatic eruption," as Lovinescu calls it. The conditions were now utterly different. As a member of the Academy he had been appointed to the National Theatre Committee, the one which chose plays. As a reader he did his duty with great conscientiousness and competence. In the archives of the National Theatre there are the manuscripts of the plays with his comments, and his judgments always show themselves to be impartial and founded on a good knowledge of the problems of stagecraft. All the more paradoxical therefore is his blindness to the lack of theatrical quality in his own productions.

March 1912 saw the staging of his play *Lumină nouă* (New Light), played by the best actors of the time (as in fact were the other four plays of his produced up to 1915). *Lumină nouă* was an adaptation of a play written long before in Italy. It held the stage for a few days and had what is called a *succès d'estime*. Criticism was reserved, respectful of the writer and academician. The conflict of passion which ought to form the principal action is worked out by means of witty dialogues, full of ideas and speculations—but devoid of dramatic qualities. There are even poems which have to be recited on stage!

The same thing happened with *O amică* (A Lady Friend), a graceful one-act piece played as curtain-raiser to Zamfirescu's other plays. In *Poezia depărtării* (The Poetry of Distance), performed in December 1912, a drama of conscience between husband and wife, with reminiscences of Ibsen, the dialogues are intensely poetic. It is the play of

a lyric poet, not of a dramatist. A fine critic, Alexandru Busuioceanu, himself an essayist and poet, has in a few lines concerning *Poezia depărtării* expressed the reason why Zamfirescu, who was excellent in the dialogues of his novels and short stories, could not succeed on the stage.

> Drama could not burst forth from the vague. And poetry is always vague. The stage demands precisely what Mr. Duiliu Zamfirescu refuses: the materialization of passion. Stage love is love which grows in the powerful sun of summer. It awakens new passions which torment us by unleashing in our souls the struggle of the souls on the stage. But Mr. Zamfirescu's love is love only in the bud. . . . There is a reserve which always goes with the souls of his heroes, a reserve which gives lyrical beauty but takes away dramatic power.[1]

Zamfirescu's last attempt to conquer the public was with *Voichiţa*, performed during the season of 1914–15, a comedy with buffo episodes which recall the youthful plays of Alecsandri. The press was ironical and critical of the prose-writers and poëts who invade the theater. Its list of such is instructive: Sadoveanu, Cazaban Brătescu-Voineşti, Delavrancea, Minulescu, and, naturally, Zamfirescu. The same review *Scena* (The Stage), in an imaginary enquiry in which the writers were asked: "What is life?", invented as Zamfirescu's answer: "A play which flops." Lovinescu, the writer's supporter without reservation, regretted that Zamfirescu had done himself an injustice by persisting too long in the theater. His literary image had nothing to gain from this ambition, at a moment when he had many adversaries with whom he was at war in literature as well as politics. Today, from a distance, the waters have cleared. Zamfirescu's theatrical misadventures have happened to others too, prose-writers and in particular poets, who have strayed into playwriting.

CHAPTER 7

Poetry

> To be cold and beautiful, the symbol of eternal art. Zamfirescu, *Către Diana* (To Diana)

WHEN the poet Macedonski, discovering the young Duiliu Zamfirescu, asserted of his poems which had been appearing for two years in *Literatorul* (The Man of Letters), "Duiliu's poems . . . were for me the challenge to write *Nopţile* (The Nights)," he paid very great tribute to Zamfirescu's early poems. What can have drawn Macedonski to this beginner? Indubitably—his gift of versification used in the service of neoromantic exuberance, which was the echo of European lyric poetry in a Romanian poetry dominated by the followers of Eminescu. For Zamfirescu was at that time open to foreign, and particularly French, influences.

The poem which launched him was *Levante şi Calavryta*, a ballad full of exotic atmosphere inspired by foreign romantics: Young, Lamartine, and especially Byron.

> Tell, Zante, where is the time when Byron quietly
> Cradled his longing on the waves of your sea. . . .[1]

It is the story of a drama: the oarsman Levante, jealous of the beautiful Calavryta, who is loved by an Englishman, kills her and goes mad. At twenty-one Zamfirescu appeared as a master of versification, a lover of rhythms, color, broad cadences, sumptuous metaphors. The evocation is still moving today.

> Beneath a dome inscribed with long Arabic letters,
> Where gold is joined to African granite,
> Where from the walls project sphinxes dozing on their paws,
> Bearing alabaster vases, and pillars with white capitals,
> There is spread a great table of Egyptian porphyry. . . .[2]

The poems published in *Literatorul* belong to his early romantic stage, that is to say they date from the period when Zamfirescu used to open his heart to his friend Duiliu Ioanin.

The same *mal de siècle*, the same spiritual states, luckless love, pessimism, disgust with life, are poured out in elegies, madrigals, and pastels, in romantic dramas, some with a social undercurrent in the taste of the period, such as the famous "*Harpista*" (The Harpist), with its swaying refrain:

> Poor Paola, how come you from Miramare
> Where in duet with the saddened sea you played
> The sighing of a wave?
> Come you today to take your harp round every Tavern?
> Do you bow your fair brow on every pillow?
> At every ball? [3]

Harpista had an enormous success with the public, comparable with the success of the conventional romantic ballads then in fashion. For years and years it was read at festivals and celebrations. Zamfirescu always considered it an irreparable indiscretion of youth and refused to publish it in his later volumes.

It must be said that even in later years, artists and especially composers of romantic ballads, appreciated the poems of Zamfirescu. One of the ballads of the time more frequently sung was composed to a poem of his, which is in fact included in *Viaţa la ţară*, where it is attributed to the young Mihai Comăneşteanu. It is a sentimental and musical set of verses which appears especially written to be set to music; it is entitled "*S-aud*" (One Hears) and figures in the volume *Alte orizonturi*.

> One hears the brooks flowing
> In the peace of the pale light;
> The valley fills with twilight
> And I go thinking of you.
>
> One hears the bell at the hermitage;
> The hermits go to pray;
> The evening star has risen
> And I go thinking of you.
>
> One hears the alpenhorn in the mountains
> Thrilling with its long sighs
> The silence of the gray forests . . .
> I still go thinking of you. [4]

The verses are so light that it is not surprising that musicians and singers most often did not know whose they were.

Contact with Italy contributed greatly to fixing the image by which Zamfirescu is known today as a poet. A large part of the poems published in *Convorbiri literare* (and in certain other journals) were written between 1890 and 1900, the decade in which he also produced his major work, the Comăneşteanu cycle. The poems appeared in three volumes: *Alte Orizonturi* (Other Horizons), 1894; *Imnuri păgîne* (Pagan hymns), 1897; *Poezii nouă* (New Poems), 1899. Between his return to Romania and his death he brought out one more volume of verse: *Pe Marea Neagră* (On the Black Sea), 1919.

It was to Roman and Greek antiquity that Zamfirescu dedicated his poetry in neoclassical style. To the direct influence exerted on his sensibility by Roman ruins and the medieval past there were added influences of a literary order. The tragedy of history made tangible by ruins on Italian soil inspired him with a poetic melancholy in contrast to the bracing effect of Italian vitality, which he celebrated in colorful poems, full of flowers and mandolins, such as "*Flori de Paşte*" (Easter Flowers), "*Anzio*," and "*Don Juan*." As in conformity with the depths of his being he dreamed and meditated in "the solitude of Rome," he felt overwhelmed by a sort of "stifled despair," which it seemed to him "must exist in every heart when the hour of recollection comes, when thought carries you to and fro, when the instability of the world is patent to you." [5] The passage of time, by which he was always obsessed, inspired verses in which he evoked past ages and his longing for ancient splendor, e.g., "*Pe Acropole*" (On the Acropolis), "*De la Villa Tusculana*" (From the Villa Tusculana), "*Către Cleobul*" (To Cleoboulos), and "*Către Diana*" (To Diana). Zamfirescu's search for classicism—by which, to use his own expression, he was "ravaged"—combined with his admiration for Giosué Carducci, at that time the patriarch of Italian classically inspired poetry. Much as he loved Leopardi as poet of love and pain, at that moment he felt the supremacy of Carducci. He had a boundless admiration for the modern classicism of *Odi barbare*—from which in fact he borrowed the title of his own volume *Imnuri păgîne* (Pagan Hymns) and from which he also made translations. The breath of savage paganism in Carducci's poetry impressed and inspired him because it matched his own sensitivity to the ancient world. But Zamfirescu's feeling was less violent, closer to a sort of sadness akin to Romanian grief.

Some poems are written in ancient meters, of which Zamfirescu was an investigator and an innovator. In a letter to Maiorescu he explains how he composed "*De la Villa Tusculana*" in hexameters,

using dactyls and trochees. On the old classical rhythm he constructs his poem with masterly skill. First comes the evocation of the places where Cicero's villa stood, today merely ruins and solitude:

The sad shadows come down on the valley from high in the hills,
Singly, pale, full of a living world of fairy tales
The fir spreads his sunshade on the ridge of the burned hilltop;
The jesting blackbird yells amid fat laurel clumps [6]

Then follows the invocation in classic style: "Cicero, ancient pillar of these classic places. . . ." [7] Then the outburst in which the poet blends with the voice from the ruins: "Full of an insatiable longing for the world of ages gone,/The time and form of today leave me cold as ice . . . ." [8] and in the end all relapses into impassive nature: "The sun dies a long death in the depth of the Tuscan seas," [9] an admirable line in which the diphthongs and vowels and the repetition, like an echo, of the vowel *u* gives the sound of a world ending. It is a learned poem, a successful copy of an ancient model, into which nevertheless there filters a restrained emotion, a sunset light which is the poet's personal note.

"*Pe Acropole*" was written at Athens in summer 1892. This poem in iambic meter was received with enthusiasm by the circle of *Convorbiri literare*. Beyond the conventional invocation of Minerva throbs the aspiration to classical art, of which Zamfirescu made an abstract ideal:

Ah! help me now, wise Minerva,
To find among many new things which deceive me,
The road to Salamis and the admiral
Who waits to turn me back to Megara, Eleusis and Corinth.

Let me come to thee, world filled with scents,
That risest from the classic time which has been so dear to me,
That freely I may gather the roses from the roads
And grow tipsy with the harmony of language from the Areopagus. [10]

A poem which recalls the classical by its sensual Epicureanism is the idyll "*Culcate–s romanițe*" (Low Lies the Mayweed), in which Zamfirescu "classicizes" in the manner of his day—and does it elegantly. Maiorescu—misquoting the title—liked the poem very much: "Your marvelous *Sunt culcate romanițe*! So beautifully and antiquely sensual, with its 'mole' and all! This in one way, and your Parthenon [*Pe Acropole*] in another, are the great result which your

two profound glimpses into the ancient world of Rome and Athens have had upon you." [11]

Lightly moves the young maiden
Bearing her body straight as a candle.
She comes with her wine-jars from the vineyard
And sells must, as in the days of old.

"White girl, your fault be it
If Polibus, for instance, meets you:
As your hands cling to the jug,
He will kiss the mole on your chin."

But she smiles. The corners of her mouth
Hide stealthily in delicate dimples
And her dark eyes take on the blackberry's hue.

And here he is, crowned with vine,
Leaping in her path. On the grass of the wood
After them, low lies the mayweed. [12]

To the same neoclassical phase belong a series of descriptive poems: "*La Villa Aldobrandini*" (At the Villa Aldobrandini), "*Anienul*" (The Anio), "*Boul*" (The Bull), "*Castel Fusano*," etc. "*La Villa Aldobrandini*" describes a fountain with the detachment of one who views it impassively.

Silent tears drip from plants
And glide along the porphyry trough;
Beneath the flow stands Orpheus playing his lyre
On a globe supported by hunched Atlas. [13]

This type of poetry is directly linked with the influence of the French Parnassians and the cult of neo-Hellenism and neopaganism in European poetry and art. In his youth Zamfirescu had been a great admirer of Théophile Gautier. The Parnassians, with their plastic, sculptural poetry, deliberately cold, won the heart of Zamfirescu in his searching after form. "To be cold and beautiful" seemed to him to be "the symbol of eternal art" ("*Către Diana*").

Zamfirescu was conscious of the coldness of his poems, of the effort of sublimation in detached contemplation. "They are cold, aren't they? I wanted to make them cold, like marble; but have they perhaps turned out pebbles?" he wonders in a letter to E. Miller-Verghi. [14] The poems did not turn out pebbles, but academic marble, yet

sometimes with strange sunset gleams in their pure lines. However, Zamfirescu's uncertainty is revealing. His neoclassical poetry corresponds to an aspiration of the intellect or an aesthetic searching. It corresponds to his aspiration toward "the clarity of the ideal," which became conscious at that period. From this searching were born his finest lines. It is a searching in depth for a clarity which is "as of lakes in a grotto, where there is no rain, no dry twigs fall, no wind blows." His cold, classicizing manner is primarily an aesthetic fact, a search for expressiveness by restraint of feeling so that poetry has in itself an objective meaning. It is poetic experimentation on a high level and has had an influence on the whole standard of poetry written since that time. Zamfirescu, however, continued to experiment in other sorts of poetry as well. That is the origin of his image as an aesthetic dilettante in perpetual transition from one style to another, not avoiding the academic.

It has been said that if he had remained in Romania, Zamfirescu would have been trapped into a career halfway between Alecsandri's *Pasteluri* (Pastels) and Coşbuc's *Idile* (Idylls). Such an opinion has in view, of course, the poems written on Romanian bucolic themes, such as "*Barza*" (The Stork), "*Vara*" (Summer), "*Sosesc cocoarele*" (The Cranes Arrive), and "*S-aud*" (One Hears). Here is "*Vara*," found in every anthology for schools:

With her fiery being
Summer is back again;
All the trees are in holiday dress.
On the limetree, bloom sits by bloom. . .
Sweet is summer in our land.

When morning appears
In the distance of the air,
All the fields seem to grow young,
And, wakened from the pebble strand,
The village herd moves off . . .

Behind it a swarm of starlings
Like waves of grey
Flit among the weeds,
Settle on the bulls' horns,
Play every sort of mad prank.

Till in the far-off sky
They make their way towards the gloomy lake,

And as they go—now and again
They are glimpsed once more
Like the remnants of smoke.[15]

As a lyric poet, Zamfirescu remained fascinated by Eminescu, for whom he had a boundless admiration. Among other things he wrote a philosophical poem—rhythmically akin to Eminescu's "*Luceafărul*" (The Evening Star)—entitled "*Fiica haosului*" (The Daughter of Chaos).

And he went today, and he went tomorrow,
And he went a long, long time . . . .[16]

The poem is an imitation of Eminescu, into which Zamfirescu, it is true, put a great deal of art. And from time to time he came upon verses whose pure line and remarkable transparency are in the last instance his own imprint.

Above the limpid lake
Fell from the vault of light
Tree branches thick with tresses
And long stems of jessamine.[17]

The heroic poem "*Miriță*," read before the Academy in 1910, represents one of the peaks of Zamfirescu's poetic craft. He uses the rhythms of the Romanian folk ballad, adapting and intertwining them, and in these rhythms writes verses whose refined transparency is his particular property. So is the composition by scenes, in which he excels. The medieval subject has a patriotic substratum. Zamfirescu magnifies the fighting spirit and heroism of the Romanians, thus opposing a whole body of lyrics in which poets like Octavian Goga lamented. He rejects the idea that "forests weep, the women weep, the flowers weep, because we have an unfulfilled dream [the union of Transylvania with the kingdom of Romania]."[18] "An untruth! I protest in the name of all Romanians!" he cried in the introduction which he read to the Academy before reading the poem.

The action takes place at the end of the thirteenth century, in the feudal Middle Ages when the local Romanian communities united to free themselves from their ties as vassals of the King of Hungary. The epic poem is divided into two parts: "*Oltul*" (The Olt) and "*Lupta*" (The Struggle). In the first part the Ban of Severin (i.e., the governor of the Banat of Severin) recieves from the King of Hungary a proposal for his daughter Marghita, sought in marriage by the king's son. In

case of refusal, the Hungarians threaten war. The Romanian prince charges his nephew Miriţă with the task of taking Marghita to the Hungarian camp beyond the River Olt. Though Miriţă loves Marghita, he nevertheless accepts the task. When they arrive on the other side of the storm-swollen Olt, Marghita is dead. . . . After the scene of her burial there follows the struggle. The second part relates the war, the death of Miriţă and his fellow warriors, and the summons to war of the Romanians, ending in the Romanian victory.

Historical elements, of course, are mingled with poetical invention. Zamfirescu was familiar with the historical data of the age of "settlement," the time in which the action takes place. The two camps are presented as, on the one hand, an army of medieval seigneurs with mercenaries from all over their realm in their service; on the other, the men who made up Romanian feudal society of the time—peasants led by the chiefs of local communities, from whom several ancient families had arisen, the boyars of the time, and among them the Romanian prince with the historic name of Litovoi.

In this epic poem are combined all Zamfirescu's qualities: his abilities as a versifier and colorist and his profound knowledge of the resources of the Romanian language. The large-scale scenes are admirable, as for example the procession of the Princess Marghita escorted by Miriţă to the Hungarian camp:

> . . . Byzantine rugs, apparel and flowers
> Pass in the flow of time like smoke,
> And behind them the host proceeds in column.[19]

The majestic evocation of the camp of the Hungarian magnates, with princes, counts, barons, Bohemian and Szekely mercenaries, court chroniclers and mathematicians, and by contrast the Romanian camp—poverty, determination, complicity with nature, desire for revenge in face of oppression by the great and proud. Similarly the portrayal of the dead princess is splendid:

> Return again in shapes of flowers
> And in the magic of dim gems,
> And let the earth lie beneath patches of cloud,
> Beneath shadows of outspread wings.[20]

With each canto the rhythm changes. Adapting and interweaving them, the poet uses all rhythms from those of folksong to the iambic verse of Eminescu's "*Scrisoarea I-a*" (First Letter). To these rhythms

he writes verses whose refined limpidity is his peculiar property, as is the composition by scenes, in which he excels.

The Romanian language is in the hands of a great master. His verses attain an admirable purity of rhythm, truly "pre-Raphaelite steps leading to the highest form of Duiliu Zamfirescu's poetry." [21] On Zamfirescu's death, Tudor Arghezi wrote an obituary in which his poetic sensitivity caused him to speak of "the flight of dragon-flies which characterizes his poetry." [22]

If we were to attempt a generalization, we would say: the dominant mood of Zamfirescu's poetry is meditative melancholy inspired with his obsession with time. In verses always perfect from the point of view of versification, the beauties are scattered like precious stones, but they often lack originality. Zamfirescu was conscious of his inability to fashion an absolutely original poetic instrument. In a way he was the victim of his great virtuosity as a versifier combined with his unbroken availability for poetical composition. Nevertheless, the 200 or so poems which he left behind him entitle him to the name of poet, because of the depth of his poetic experience at every encounter with the different forms of Romanian lyric. Throughout his life he was dogged by poetry and he never ceased to seek feverishly to create it in accordance with his artistic temperament.

Contemporary critics pointed to the artistic skill of his poetry. "He is not a popular poet; instead he is a poet loved by artists," declared Ibrăileanu, ignoring his pastels and Romanian ballads.[23] In the dialogues of the critic Mihai Dragomirescu, in which he imagined a conversation between the great writers of the past, Zamfirescu was made to confess: "I have always had too artistic a conscience."[24] And Iorga points to "an elegance in his salon poems never before encountered in our lyric poetry."[25] These "salon" poems include the occasional verses, and especially the numerous love poems such as the beautiful *Malvina*:

> You are written only in graces and visions,
> In elegantly swaying rhythm. . . .[26]

Ion Pillat wrote of Zamfirescu's poetry that it is "situated at a crossroads of ancient optimism and modern pessimism." [27]

In a recent study the critic Ion Negoiţescu undertook a detailed analysis of Zamfirescu's poems and identified in his experiments an "amazing anticipatory tendency." That is to say, from his encounters with so many forms the poet "finally discovered the modern lyricism of decline, of obscure liminal states, which cannot be verified except

by their objective transcription in landscape," and the critic points to Ion Vinea, Bacovia, and Trakl on the same line of melancholy. He closes his analysis with a penetrating glance into the depths of Zamfirescu's poetry, which seems to us to sum up perfectly its peculiar quality:

> Not only can a subtle melancholy, read as scepticism and a rare discretion of sensibility, read as "serenity," be recognized in the poetry of Duiliu Zamfirescu, but also a suave and yet penetrating sadness of landscape and scene, the pale chromatism of decline, the floral and musical detachment from this world. A twilight of lemon blossoms, of the cry of cranes, of the virginal pallor of death.[28]

CHAPTER 8

Correspondence: Portrait of a Writer

I felt that you have that just and sincere heart. (Maiorescu to Zamfirescu) [1]

I am waiting for Time, the just judge of men, to level everything and to put each in his niche, as in the ancient columbaria." These rather melancholy words express the feeling which Zamfirescu had of not being understood by his contemporaries.

Time has erased the image left by the writer in the last part of his life, after he had conducted excessive polemics, especially with the "peasantist" writers of Transylvania. It was an image hawked about by his political opponents, the liberals, and by the Poporanist writers. It must be admitted that Zamfirescu's irascibility when faced with the attacks made on him, added fuel to the polemics. It was from his opponents, who were irritated among other things by the diplomat's aloofness, which they put down as arrogance or conceit, that the brilliant but very subjective George Călinescu was inspired to describe him as a snobbish Tănase Scatiu driving his britchka through his vineyard at Faraoane in white gloves! [2] As the years passed, Zamfirescu had begun to make peace with his literary opponents. After World War I he had even supported C. Stere's candidature for the Academy.[3] But the echoes of the polemics had not completely died away when death suddenly took Zamfirescu in 1922.

The posthumous publication of his correspondence was a revelation. It revealed one of the most important—if not indeed the foremost—of Romanian epistolary writers, and contributed to knowledge of Zamfirescu as a man. The letters were published in several stages, as they emerged from archives. One part was published by I. E. Torouţiu in his collection *Studii şi documente literare* (Literary Studies and Documents) between 1931 and 1940. The correspondence with Titu Maiorescu was edited by Emanoil Bucuţa and came out in 1937. The last, *Scrisori inedite* (Unpublished Letters), appeared in 1967, edited by Al. Săndulescu, and among them are the hitherto unknown letters of his youth.

The letters of his youth mentioned in Chapter 1 date from the time he was twenty till he was twenty-two. They are addressed to a friend named Duiliu Ioanin and are moving literary documents because they express with a certain ingenuousness the aspirations of a future writer. In these pages, in which romantic clichés alternate with accents of sincere emotion, we find the portrait of a young provincial intellectual, suffering from an unhappy love for a girl who marries another man. To his confidant Ioanin he unveils his sufferings, calling the resources of literature to his aid. We gather that to his beloved also he expresses his feelings by romantic gestures: bunches of snowdrops or verses from Musset, because "poets are the heart of humanity. They do not only suffer for themselves; they suffer for every man who is able to feel, for every woman who is able to weep." When he leaves the subject of love and talks of his life in the provinces, where he was a deputy magistrate, 1880–81, his tone changes. He sketches little scenes, portraits, or landscapes, from real life. Here, for example, is the portrait of a woman. Summoned to enquire into the murder of a peasant, he is impressed by the face of his young widow:

A woman with eyes such as I have never seen in my life. If they had been carved in flesh by Canova, they could not have been more fixed, better modelled, more dreamy; the iris floats in a violet vapour, hazily sweet, shaded by the darkest lashes that ever shaded a fine eye. And yet, these eyes are stupid! A very interesting pale face, which cuts a sorry figure on the shoulders of a wretched woman brought up in the fear of God and her husband, with three children at the age of twenty! And with thirteen brothers round about. Really, fourteen children is no joke! Today at Topolog when I went to see her, she was just cutting up some noodles.

The devil tempted me to pay her a compliment; at once she replied: "Dear, dear, how did that come into your head!" This douche completely quenched my enthusiasm.[4]

Here, in a different tone again, is a little scene with an old woman and a landscape:

I arrived at Tîrgovişte, dear Cocobus, worn out with fatigue, and on the first evening I stayed at the hotel. Now I find myself domiciled with Mrs. Mariţa Sărdăreasa, a sort of human fig with curls on her forehead, who plies you with endearments at every word: "Darling" here, "darling" there; "Mr. Procurator, dear" to the left, "ducky" to the right; in a word, a butter-churn of kindnesses! The important thing is that next to my room is a closet which she will shortly let me have. Your old friend awaits you like his *alter ego*. . . . As I write, the bugles from Mănăstirea Dealului are sounding "Lights Out," and their sweet faraway notes seem to call sleep to lull us. The "Reveille" resembles the voice of oblivion; that is why it awakens in one's heart an inexpressible sadness, a sweet regret, a poetic feeling, which dies away with their silence. You must know that at Mănăstirea Dealului there are today only some four monks, the last remnant of a generation that knew the young Cîrlova; the others have died, and the holy place is today a barracks for the Divisional School. Lower down is the convent of Viforîta where it is said that [the poet] Cîrlova loved the nun Elizabeta, his adored Lina. This convent is still inhabited by nuns, and well filled too; it has about eighty. As soon as I can I shall go to visit them. Can you imagine a love affair in a convent? It must be so holy and so sweet! Ah! you can imagine it because you have yourself loved in a convent. Otherwise, the people here are comic, like all provincial people. There are as many parties as individuals. The ladies I don't know yet, because I haven't paid any visits.[5]

The letters of his youth are the chrysalis from which emerged in his maturity the correspondence sent from abroad between 1888 and 1906. His letters from Italy are addressed mostly to Titu Maiorescu, then to Iacob Negruzzi, the secretary of *Convorbiri literare*, and to other figures in the world of Romanian culture: Nicolae Petraşcu, Trandafir Djuvara, Elena Miller-Verghi, etc. The letters are interesting as documents in the Romanian context because of the exchange of ideas and views with Maiorescu in particular, which throws light on a certain moment in Romanian literary history, and also because they provide a portrait of the writer.

When the correspondence between Zamfirescu and Maiorescu appeared for the first time, edited by Em. Bucuţa in 1937, it was a literary event. It revealed a connection between them unknown to their contemporaries. The reaction of admiration was expressed through the mouths of critics of varying ages and mentalities. Eugen Lovinescu, the most consistent admirer of Zamfirescu throughout his life, considered him the greatest of Romanian letter writers. Concerning the letters to Maiorescu he wrote:

They are a work of art free from the ostentation which is always caused by the presence of the reading public . . . an artistic sensitivity in all fields, literature, music, plastic arts, which is always on the move, knowing how to see, and which desires to express what it has felt and seen, and above all, does it with the skill of a novelist on holiday, without strain, but with the same classical harmony of phrases which are kept up from time to time by the unexpected word or image and by windows opened on to misty views.[6]

Şerban Cioculescu wrote:

It is not a question of skill in letter-writing as a literary genre, but of the total expression of Duiliu Zamfirescu's personality. In none of his works did he

have the luck to express himself completely. Without betraying the studied bearing and style of his personality, Duiliu Zamfirescu mirrors himself perfectly in his letters to Maiorescu. It might be said that he has made a true self-examination in these missives.[7]

And Mihail Sebastian has spoken of the "exceptional interest of this correspondence," of its value as a psychological document: "We must bless these discoveries which help us to understand in their full complexity the great figures of our culture."[8]

All the letters sent by Zamfirescu to Maiorescu have been preserved. On the other hand few of those written by Maiorescu survive. Probably some disappeared at the time of World War I; but it is also likely that Maiorescu wrote less frequently than Zamfirescu—less frequently and more laconically, in accordance with his concise style. In the Bucuţa edition there are 197 letters of Zamfirescu as compared with 44 of Maiorescu.

The dialogue can be reconstituted, however, from the contents of Zamfirescu's letters. From him came the impulse to write letters which bring Maiorescu the homage of "a warm and sincere heart," as the latter recognized at the beginning of their friendship. This epistolary intercourse with Maiorescu is regarded as a model of "literary friendship" in the history of Romanian literature.

It was a friendship between a master and a disciple who differed not only in age but in social position and literary prestige, which in Maiorescu's case was at its peak during those years. Even when the gap between their positions had to some extent closed, Zamfirescu's literary reputation having grown along with his social position, the latter's feeling, reflected in his letters, remained unchanged. For him Maiorescu was the guardian figure of his life, to whom he accorded affection, admiration, and respect. Zamfirescu considered himself "bred up in the reading of *Convorbiri literare*." Writing from Brussels in 1894, where he had begun *Viaţa la ţară*, he recalled that from the start he had been captivated by the critic's spell and won over by the intelligence and his judgment in the literary sphere. He is sincere when he declares in his solemn letter written to celebrate his fortieth birthday (October 1898): "Never have I taken an important decision without asking myself 'What would Mr. Maiorescu say?'"[9] In the letter in which he discusses the changes proposed by Maiorescu in the novel *În război* he writes:

Allow me to tell you now with a certain kindling of the soul that I am very little interested in what the public thinks. . . . Just as it matters very little to me

what the critics say. I write to you and I make concessions both because I am fond of you and because I think that you are the only Romanian in literature who is carried away by what is beautiful, independently of other concerns.[10]

In another letter from the same period he tells Maiorescu that he perceived deep within "something common to our spiritual mode of being," in what he calls "my aesthetico-moral lineaments." This confession is important and should be set alongside another statement of 1901: "I do not know whether it is lack of modesty to tell you that my Junimism, which is entirely disinterested, has achieved more in the literary way than that of many others."[11]

Zamfirescu was without doubt the closest to Maiorescu in his aesthetics and in his ideas about Romanian society. His sincerity and attachment to Maiorescu remained consistent to the end. All the more dramatic therefore was Zamfirescu's emotion at the rupture which showed itself after his return to Romania in 1906 and which was confirmed by Maiorescu's reply to the novelist's inaugural speech at the Romanian Academy in 1909.

The letters mirror the principal interest of Zamfirescu's life—writing: "A great thing is this writing madness." He lived out his vocation as a writer in a continuous intellectual effort to explain to himself his thoughts and feelings. The letters reflect the writer's intentions, hesitations, doubts, and often his illusions, during the time he was writing the Comăneşteanu cycle. Zamfirescu is the only Romanian classic who has left a sort of journal in letters, from which one can follow the stages of the elaboration of a work.

Zamfirescu was not a man of ideas, a theoretician of his craft. Sometimes his theories are defective from the scientific point of view, erring through generalizations. But his speculations are always interesting. Thus the comparison he makes between the Russian peasant and the Romanian peasant is quite fascinating, as fascinating as the later generalizations of a Keyserling.

My researches into Tolstoy have made me closely acquainted with the great resemblance which exists between the nature of the Russian peasant and the Romanian peasant, an absorbing resemblance and one which is almost dangerous from the political point of view—as is, on the other hand, the difference between them, which is hidden in the depths of the Romanian's nature, a difference hard to grasp and to define, but very real and very great. The Russian (and, in general the Slav) peasant is fatalistic to the point of despair, fantastic in his stories (reproduced by Gogol and Turgenev to the point of lunacy), both these characteristics being doubled within him and reflected in his own nature; whereas our peasant, also fatalistic and very imaginative, is

reflected both within and without, being pantheist rather than monotheist in religion, under equal influence from his Roman and Dacian forefathers. For this reason, intellectual balance is complete in the Romanians and incomplete in the Slavs, and if the Romanian is more inflamed in his imagination than almost all the other neo-Latin peoples, he owes it to his country, the so-called "Confins de l'Orient," which has given birth to the incomparable allegory of Mioriţa and the whole contemporary poetry of our legends. But we shall never meet among the Romanians types like those of Dostoevsky; a Raskolnikov is impossible in our country among the sons of well-to-do peasants, nor shall we ever meet religious sectarians, the castrated, the milk-drinkers, nihilists, etc. The son of a well-to-do peasant in our country as a general rule adopts the Latin character, becoming lordly and arrogant, a real parvenu. Appalling crimes, cases of remorse, are only exceptionally seen among us. That is why Caragiale's drama *Năpasta* in its actual setting is false. In our peasant only one notion is clear and can rise to be a real spiritual driving force: possession of land. This will be basic to my novel.[12]

But his preoccupations with literary theory are important in the context of Romanian culture at the end of the nineteenth century when there were few Romanian intellectuals as knowledgeable as Zamfirescu about Western literature (French and Italian, but also English) and Russian. He has the distinction of being the first Romanian writer to be interested in the problem of the novel in general and especially in the fate of the Romanian novel. "What is a novel? And what is the aim of a novelist? I think it is to give you the most intensive illusion about the reality of life." The ideal at which he aimed was the realism of Balzac and the Russian novelists—"the literature of the three modern geniuses," Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev. These novelists know the "art of saying possible things," that is, convincing things, whatever they may be. Zamfirescu accepts modern relativism, asserting that anything may be the subject of a novel. "All individuals good or bad, are possible; all theories false or true, according as they come to light at one time or another." [13] This was a daring idea for a man who was by nature a traditionalist. Such contradictions between what he believed and what he intuited are part of his makeup as man and writer. "To idealise in the real world, creating living and possible types, seems to me the highest aim of art." [14]

Though nurtured on contemporary French literature, Zamfirescu could not come to terms with the psychologism of the French analytical novel or with the stylistic searchings of novelists like Flaubert. After reading Paul Bourget's novel *Le Disciple*, then in fashion, he writes: "What does the title 'psychological novel' mean? It is an empty phrase, since every good novel must be psychological."

And he gives as an example of successful analysis Balzac's *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, "in which the author is never felt for an instant and there is not a word about theory. Psychological, a study of the human heart from end to end, and—more than in Paul Bourget—art." Flaubert's art, centered on style, which he admired, nevertheless failed to correspond to his idea of the novelist's vocation. "The art of writing dramas, novels and short stories, is not *the art of writing*, but *the art of telling*."[15] Maiorescu's answer to this letter has been preserved from the destruction of Zamfirescu's papers in World War I. It is as follows:

I am completely on your side against Flaubert-Zola. I read and reread Dickens. There's a warm writer . . . . What mastery in rousing sympathy for the misery of the lower classes! What sunshine over all his writings! Whereas Flaubert-Zola-Maupassant write beneath the gray sky of blasé skeptics and their writings become as oppressive as the third week of rain.[16]

It may seem surprising that Maiorescu, the critic who placed the aesthetic above all other criteria in his judgment of literary work, should have let himself be carried away into making a distinction between good and bad subjectivity in literature.

Because Zamfirescu was thinking first of all of the Romanian novel, the letters contain his essential ideas which he expressed in prefaces and critical articles. He felt the need to create fiction which should express the reality of contemporary Romanian society and not exotic fantasies (like those of his own youthful productions!). On numerous occasions he affirmed the interest of Romanian society as a subject for a novel, coinciding once more with Lovinescu: "All the strata of the nation have the right to be represented in literature." But while he affirms its interest, he criticizes the Romanian world and character in harsh terms, such as "atavistic lack of civilization."

I consider that never has Romanian society presented greater interest from the literary point of view. On the basis of a political-social idea of the late Brătianu an almost new world was erected: the world of the *arendaşi*. At first barelegged, and subsequently liberals, they gradually became conservatives as they increased their wealth. In social development this gave rise to the reaction of the peasantry, which in '88 and '89 manifested itself in an agrarian uprising. In political development this idea produced an effect contrary to its aim, that is to say it strengthened the conservative party, the scientifically conservative party, the party that thinks that any measure which is in conformity with a thing's *raison d'être* is a conservative measure. Specifically it opened the gate wide in the future for Mr. Carp and the youth of the right. In literary development it gave rise to that curious class of spiritually restless

women and half-educated men who come to your lectures, understand a great many things and discuss still more—some thinking that they know the peasant perfectly, and others that they don't know him at all because they want to forget where they started from—a class at whose base there is an atavistic lack of civilization (a thing which happens among the French people too, and in other nations, but much less among Italians). To study this world would be interesting.[17]

Fiction must be raised from mediocrity, from the status of "popular tales and novelettes." This mediocrity had been under attack from Maiorescu for a generation. Zamfirescu thus embraced one of the critic's chief preoccupations. With the exception of Creagna, whom he considered an artist, Zamfirescu rejected peasantist fiction for "aesthetic" reasons. The Sămănatorist writers gave an idyllic picture of the peasantry and the village, while the Poporanists pursued political aims, creating a deliberately popular literature which denounced the vices of the exploiters.

In articles and letters Zamfirescu criticized the Transylvanian writers Slavici, Coşbuc, and Goga in language that was excessive and often unjust. But he was expressing an essential idea, namely that Romanian fiction could not progress unless it became more modern, that is unless it raised itself to another intellectual plane and gave up its peasant themes, its idealization of the peasant, its "artificial sickly sweetness." As a matter of fact, Zamfirescu considered that the peasants' only spiritual motive forces were love and the passion for the soil, an intuition later confirmed by Rebreanu when he created his peasant character Ion.

Zamfirescu was only anticipating Lovinescu by a few years when he wrote to Maiorescu in 1902: "I consider that the time has come to abandon the artificial sickly sweetness of spineless peasants in love and to create living men in our literature." [18] Lovinescu wrote in 1904 in one of his first critical studies: "Our peasantist writing is overdone and rather artificial—like everything doctrinaire—and has many aspects that are far from aesthetic." He continues;

The same hostility was displayed by the Poporanists to the author of *Viaţa la ţară*, because his literature is more comprehensive, not being merely the picture of a single social stratum, but that of the entire Romanian nation. It is true that Mr. Duiliu Zamfirescu has portrayed the peasants with warmth and sympathy, but he has also portrayed other people. In the midst of socialist and nationalist demagogy, Mr. Duiliu Zamfirescu has persisted in believing that there is also a ruling class that is honorable, cultured and adorned with certain spiritual qualities; he has even discovered that there are still boyars—not upstarts or Phanariots—but Romanian boyars with a love for their ancestral soil and humanity toward the peasants, boyars who played an important part in the historical development of our nation, in the revolution of 1848 as well as in the Union, in the election of Prince Carol as well as in the 1877 war. . . . We think it proper to point out to those who wish to know, that this writer's work is healthy and serene in conception, steeped in love of nation and country, that it does not sow dissension among social classes, that it has the same warm sympathy for all that is good, whether high or low, that it has not glossed over anything nor on the other hand touched anything up because of a political doctrine, and that in a word *it is classic*.

It is worth mentioning here the sequel to Lovinescu's criticism, in which he points out the angle from which the Poporanists at the beginning of the twentieth century "glorified the peasantry." It was the angle of a politicized ideology and a materialist vision of man. The poporanists, says Lovinescu, saw in man only the beast, intent on satisfying its instincts . . . only materialism and pessimism. . . . The soul did not exist, only the body . . .

I think that Mr. Duiliu Zamfirescu was right about the Comăneşteanus. For if we are where we are today, we owe it to this middle rank of boyars, whom, as A. D. Xenopol reminds us in his *Istoria partidelor politice în România* [History of the Political Parties in Romania], we see involved in all the great deeds of our nation. . . . It was therefore natural that all those who portray the boyar class as pitiless, etc., should not come to terms with the literature of Duiliu Zamfirescu.[19]

It is interesting to note that parts of Lovinescu's criticism are passed over by present critical writing in Romania.

While he was writing the Comăneşteanu cycle, Zamfirescu was clear-headedly pursuing some technical problems of the novel. To Maiorescu, who reproached him at the end of *Viaţa la ţară* for not following out the secondary actions, he explained intuiting future tendencies in the modern novel:

Do you think that all the incidental occurrences in a novel have to be brought to a solution? It is a question of life in the country, and therefore of a multitude of trifles which remain in the background and are only there to complete the picture.[20]

The same part is played by the secondary characters, whose "development behind the scenes" he defends against the puzzled Maiorescu. When the critic reproached him with the vulgarity of certain expressions used by Tanase Scatiu, Zamfirescu replied that

they were part of the character's reality. The inclusion in *În război* of an authentic document, the mobilization order, was the subject of long explanations on his part in the name of historical truth. These few reflections give proof of Zamfirescu's perspicacity. Maiorescu was less receptive to realist innovations than Zamfirescu, the most loyal of his Junimist disciples.

Zamfirescu's letters contain a great number of clear-sighted remarks. About Eminescu he wrote a penetrating comparison with Leopardi:

> There is between Eminescu and Leopardi such an extraordinary affinity that the simplicity of Leopardi's pain seems to have been the underground spring which has emerged in the foreign pool of Eminescu's poetry one artless autumn morning.[21]

For Zamfirescu, Eminescu is "a poet greater than the time in which he lived." In D'Annunzio he saw "a decadent" in whom he found "the wasted moral energy" of the medieval condottieri. From Rome in 1890 he reads some feuilletons in *Lupta* (The Struggle) by a Mr. Iorga: "Who and what is he? He is a fresh, good-humored apparition."

Zamfirescu showed great curiosity as regards new ideas and trends. He was interested, for example, in socialist theories. Conservative that he was, he could see in radical socialism "a sublime idea," namely

> the abolition of the knowledge of property, which will raise from men's heads the murk of their meanest preoccupations, and like a huge sack of ballast cast from a balloon, will lift human intelligence 3,000 meters into the air.[22]

On the subject of Gherea, the theoretician of "tendentious art," Zamfirescu criticizes the application of historic materialism to art:

> A devotee of Karl Marx and his interpreter in economics, Engels, he [Gherea] formulates his economic-literary theory seeking the formula of the poets' spiritual makeup in the economic substratum of their time . . . hence inevitably the conclusion that your [Maiorescu's] school, with its explanation of man through himself, is false.[23]

Zamfirescu was preparing to reply to Gherea, showing that "history proves at every step that the poets have been completely independent of the economic characteristics of their time," and gave examples. The monograph which he wanted to write "against Liberal-Socialist theories" remained a mere project. It is clear, however, that

the problem obsessed him, because in the course of the same year (1891) he returns to the subject:

> You must know that Gherea's criticisms will not let me sleep. I consider that the problem today is much more difficult, because we are dealing with intelligent and cultured men who make beauty the servant of political economy, a debatable point but in my view a false one.[24]

But the value of Zamfirescu's correspondence is above all literary, as Lovinescu judged when he appreciated "the stylistic beauty and the intellectual tension of the content, which is present even in the moments of relaxation." Whatever he is talking about—journeys, career, family, but above all Romania and his literary interests—Zamfirescu composes with little touches in different shades a living portrait which speaks to the reader. He expresses himself naturally in epistolary style: he writes easily, with a genuine spontaneity tempered by his innate restraint. Friendship is an emotion that suits by the very limit which it sets to confidences. The letters speak of his need to communicate when he felt himself in isolation, far from Romania. One senses an availability for conversation, for the sharing of emotion and thoughts, which is the essence of epistolary art. "What I want to tell you has no definite character; it is a confused pleasure which has strayed into my life like a mist and only occasionally condenses into a raindrop that falls."[25]

His letters are a model of style; a natural style, sincere in tone and literary in manner.

> I often walk and climb toward the Villa Pamphili as far as San Pietro in Montorio, from where one can see all Rome in panorama. On sunny days about three o'clock it is the most wonderful holiday for one's eyes. As I understand it you yourself shun the impressions of things that have been too much praised, and even in less-known places you look for corners of your own.
>
> I, on the other hand, try to abandon myself as far as I can to the emotions which come to me direct from things without special training or study. I go up to all the celebrated things and feel truly happy when I come across something which moves me.[26]

Zamfirescu shows himself a good partner in conversation, in excursions, in chat. He vibrates in the face of life, moved by the harmony of "things right and beautiful." He recognizes that he may seem "rather bourgeois in weighing human affairs." He recognizes many faults in himself, such as "a rather stereotyped way of speaking," but the way in which he writes these ordinary things is enchanting.

CHAPTER 9

The Language of Duiliu Zamfirescu

For what are we all, we writers, if not fashioners of words?[1]

ZAMFIRESCU throughout his life was preoccupied with the Romanian language. He realized one essential for the future of Romanian culture, that the evolution of Romanian society bore a relation to the language. In the preface to his *Novele* of 1888[2] he attempted a literary analysis of Romanian society seen through the language, taking as examples Slavici and Caragiale. In Slavici he finds the language of the peasantry "a rich and vigorous language which has not been changed either by fashion or by passing circumstances." Caragiale brings on to the stage the suburban world:

> the man from the outskirts . . . who speaks a language after his own likeness; he mangles neologisms and mingles them with annoying barbarisms. Spiritually he is as hybrid and as false as can be. But his character consists precisely in this lack of character, and a talented writer will be the more successful in proportion as he leaves him in his own element. But what about the class with whom we are concerned?

And Zamfirescu raises the problem of a modern literary speech, an expression of those who speak neither the language of the *mahala* nor that of the peasantry. He places such people in the Romanian middle class (from which he himself came), which "has succeeded in forming a normal speech that is pure and indeed elegant," and he asks the question: "Isn't this the road on which we must set our stories and novels?" The road was that of modernization.

Arguing with Maiorescu in letters about the language of writers from Transylvania and the Banat who used dialectal expressions, he does not deny the "emotional beauty" of their language, but considers that "we must leave our descendants a language in which they can move freely, the living language of our speech, without dead expressions borrowed from the chroniclers and without dialectal curiosities." [3] His quarrel with the Transylvanians and later with the popor-

anists was in the last resort a question of language. Not that he did not admire the beauties of the peasant language, its plastic character, its images—after all he had a great admiration for Creangă—but owing to the fact that the "peasantist" writing was often exaggerated and unaesthetic, Zamfirescu considered that to reach a European level of culture it was necessary to go beyond this language. Listening once in Transylvania to Romanian doinas played by a band in a restaurant ("after the Hungarians had gone . . . and we Romanians were left on our own"), he is stirred by their sad beauty ("as though an unhappy dream had come to soothe my hearing at dawn"). Thereupon he understood, he says, what he calls "the a priori concept of Slavici's peasants," whom the latter saw through "the distorting crystal of folk poetry."[4] Like the melody of the doina, the peasant language contains profound beauties. But such a language seems to him

> like an impediment to the further development of our literature and in particular to passing from the stage of legends, anecdotes and tales to that of short stories and lyric poetry, and then to the genuinely cultured stage of novels and drama.[5]

Zamfirescu's contradictory and untimely reactions to Caragiale's work are well known. The fact is that there was between the two men an incompatibility of temperament and on Zamfirescu's side probably a subconscious jealousy—though he refused to admit it. Zamfirescu was no bohemian, although in his journalistic days he had frequented the literary cafés where Caragiale spent his life. The pleasure which Caragiale took in the world of "Lache and Mache" was foreign to him. In his youth he had suffered, he admits, from "Caragiale's coarseness and his own naivety." His pride had been wounded by the jokes with which Caragiale teased him, even in Maiorescu's drawing room. All the same he was fascinated by Caragiale's personality, and in later life he recognized in him "a great visionary" and one of the foremost Romanian writers. If we analyze closely the reason why Caragiale got on Zamfirescu's nerves, we find a problem of language. Although he could not deny the truth of Caragiale's characters, Zamfirescu rejected the generalization about Romanian society reflected by the characters put on the stage by Caragiale. Zamfirescu understood the objective power of Caragiale's plays, which deploy the lingo of mannerisms and clichés used by a society of half-educated people. Romanian comedy of the type which may be called "the *mahala* in power" is inseparable from the language of which it is constructed. When Zamfirescu is revolted and writes in that polemical style which so

often did him disservice: "With his louts from Dealul Spirei, with his idiots who sign anonymous telegrams, nothing of the spiritual core of the Romanians is revealed," he is really expressing alarm. He glimpses the immensity of the moral desert revealed by the language of which Caragiale is making fun.

Zamfirescu considered that Romanian, at the stage it had reached at the end of the nineteenth century, was fitted to be a cultural instrument of European standard. He strongly asserts this in the preface to the 1902 edition of *În război*.[6]

It is a great spiritual solace for anyone who spends his life trying to catch the fleeting shape of an image in words to know that he has at his disposal a language as perfect as ours is at the end of the nineteenth century.

When he uses the word "perfect," Zamfirescu is referring to the language's possibilities of expression. In this he himself made a major contribution which cannot be ignored. The quality of his language puts him in the front rank of Romanian literature, even if his work is unequal from the point of view of his power of fictional invention. Zamfirescu exploited the possibilities of the language without falling into the excess of expressivity due to the "native" vocabulary and yet without falling into neologisms.

It is an extraordinarily varied language. His peasants speak the authentic peasant tongue; the half-educated, such as the *arendaş* Scatiu, talk the language of the *mahala*; the Comăneşteanus talk "the normal speech that is pure and indeed elegant"—the author's own. Handled by Zamfirescu, Romanian is a flexible instrument in which ideas are expressed correctly and simply, and yet with a maximum of expressivity. His letters illustrate this style: a normal language—that is, composed of current vocabulary; pure—that is, with style. Zamfirescu proved by his own style that one could be equally at ease speaking Romanian as speaking French. The possibility of arriving at a language that can be a common denominator is the mark of a language of culture. It is noticeable, for example, that Saşa Comăneşteanu talks the same language to the peasants on her estate as she talks to her family. Zamfirescu speaks somewhere of the indispensable "ordinariness" of a language that aims at being an instrument of communication between all those who speak it. "Ordinariness" means balance between extremes, a quality which distinguished the language of culture, or "classicism" as Zamfirescu liked to call it.

Romanian is raising itself to the imperishable structure of a beginning of classicism, for which it has been prepared by the writers of the preceding

generation, Messers. Gane, Caragiale, Vlahuţă, Delavrancea, Brătescu-Voineşti, before whom Odobescu coming from above and Creangă from below gave one another a friendly handshake.[7]

The quality of Zamfirescu's language captivated Lovinescu. It is worth quoting the passage which Lovinescu devoted to it on the appearance of Zamfirescu's correspondence.

After so many decades of literary evolution, after the appearance of so many great artistic temperaments, which have almost entirely changed the look of Romanian writing—Duiliu Zamfirescu's style, in the particular sense of classic balance, still remains the most accomplished model to date in our literature. A sense of precise form without digressions and studied picturesqueness, an elegance arising from simplicity and discretion, an obvious restraint, a judicious blending of the current speech of a man of general culture not excessively specialized, with neologisms and archaisms in appropriate places, all melted into a soluble mass, a tone of seemly detachment as regards the subject and of respect for himself and the reader, a combination of apparent coldness and contained enthusiasm, a fluidity which is not to be confused with levity and frivolity, make this style a work of art that is valid by the harmony and balance which it breathes. . . . Threatened by the monotony of perfection, our indispensable curiosity is maintained at each turn in the sentence by a word, an image, a change of horizon. Although he guides his thought among palpable realities, in the end we are left with the impression of an unfulfilled expectation. His coolness assuages thirst without quenching it, not by inadequacy of expression, but by the writer's art in prolonging his effect. You feel that he knows more than he says and that he restrains himself out of discretion and social or artistic tact; he expresses just what is needed to arouse curiosity without stating it; he makes you rise from the feast, slightly hungry, slightly thirsty, with an appetite ready to be reawakened. To unite precision, aristocratic elegance and transparency of expression—in a word, the classicism of measured, balanced, limited form—with a deliberate projection into the indeterminate through windows opening on distant prospects, represents a rare art, especially in a literature saturated with verbal plasticity, picturesqueness and matter of fact plebeian vigor.[8]

Conclusion

Zamfirescu has survived as an artist of language. In *Viaţa la ţară* he has succeeded in expressing something of the "eternal Romanian." Right through the novel there runs, as through a poem, a powerful, profound, and subterranean emotion, continually present: the dominant emotion which swayed Zamfirescu—that of the Romanian soil, "the longing for our deserted plains," for which the heart of every Romanian pines. Out of the matching of this emotion and the language is born this book, which expresses the quintessence of the Romanian's relationship with the soil. The images which he fixes: the expanse of the Bărăgan, the lake at Comăneşti, the fields with the herds grazing far off, the starry sky of the summer night which Matei Damian watches with the shepherd Micu, correspond to a universe which every Romanian feels, because he carries it with him in his subconscious—a universe with the smell of earth and grass, the plains in which the voices of men sound as they drive the cattle or plough the fields. If we may venture to make a comparison—*mutatis mutandis*—we should say that the art of evoking the country atmosphere by words in Zamfirescu's scenes corresponds in a way to the art of Constable's painting in England. What Constable has done for the English countryside Zamfirescu has done for the Romanian. He has written the fiction of tradition, rootedness, the slow-moving life in which men close to the earth have lived. The Comăneşteanu cycle presents a vision of the Romanian world, a vision in which things unfold according to natural evolution. In the rhythm of this "slow history," men can adapt themselves to change while their psychological and spiritual core is preserved. By its tempo and its human style this world distantly recalls the world which the nineteenth-century Russian novelists described on the large scale of Russia. In such a world evolution resembles an organic tissue elaborated by "the continuity of generations, institutions, customs," as Solzhenitsyn writes in his novel *August 1914*. Zamfirescu wrote the Comăneşteanu cycle with these criteria of continuity in mind. In other words he was the novelist of a vanished world whose image has descended into the subconscious, where it survives with the power of myth.

Zamfirescu's art conserves the charm of a world destined to disappear in the twentieth century together with the rural structures of Eastern Europe. The new age was to be the age of Tănase Scatiu. He depicted the Comăneşteanus as destined to disappear as a social class. He was a champion of the gentry and the peasants against the bourgeoisie. The observer, moralist, and writer take equal part, with the result that the first three panels of this social fresco form a classic.

Notes and References

Chapter One

1. Preface to Fourth Edition of *Viaţa la ţară*, in *Opere* II, p. 21.
2. *Arendaş* is a party to a contract whereby in return for a sum of money, he has for a certain period the right to exploit the other party's property (e.g., an agricultural estate). The word took on a pejorative sense with reference to the *arendaşi* who exploited the labor power of the peasants for their own enrichment. It is in this sense that Tănase Scatiu is presented.
3. *Mi-aduc aminte ca acum*
   Cînd alergam cu capul gol
   Prin prăfăria de pe drum
   Şi cînd ardeam cărţile scrum
   Şi şcoalei dam ocol. From *"Sosesc"* in *Opere*, I, p. 171.
4. Letter to Duiliu Ioanin, 26 September 1880, *Scrisori inedite*, p. 129.
5. Letter to Ecaterina Munteanu, his cousin, 30 November 1879, quoted by M. Gafiţa, *Duiliu Zamfirescu*, Bucharest, 1969, pp. 59–60.
6. *Scrisori inedite*, ed. Al. Săndulescu, Bucharest, 1967.
7. Letter to Duiliu Ioanin, 13 July 1880, *Scrisori inedite*, pp. 93–94.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
10. Some have been reprinted in *Opere*, III, Bucharest, 1972.
11. Volume V of *Opere*, which is in preparation, will contain his work as a publicist, printed for the first time in its entirety.
12. *Literatorul*, 10 February 1880, pp. 49–50.
13. N. Petraşcu, *Duiliu Zamfirescu*, Bucharest, 1929, pp. 7–11, 13–14.
14. Letter to Iacob Negruzzi, 3 June 1891, *Cele mai frumoase scrisori*, p. 140.
15. *Opere*, III, pp. 107–10.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 306–12.
17. For Badea Cîrţan see p. 81.
18. Letter to Elena Miller-Verghi, 7 March 1895, *Scrisori inedite*, p. 107.
19. Letter to Nicolae Petraşcu, 6 September 1888, *Cele mai frumoase scrisori*, p. 69.
20. Letter to Iacob Negruzzi, 10 February 1890, *Ibid*, p. 115.
21. Letter to Titu Maiorescu, 21 October 1890, *Cele mai frumoase scrisori*, p. 127.
22. Letter to Tr. G. Djuvara, 24 September/5 October 1895, *Scrisori inedite*, p. 41.

23. Letter to Elena Miller-Verghi, 13/25 February 1898, *Ibid.*, p. 217.

24. Review published by Nicolae Petraşcu and Ollănescu Ascanio, former members of Junimea.

25. Marshal Averescu (1859–1938) was the supreme commander of the Romanian troops in the First World War and won the victory of Mărăşeşti (July 1917) over the Germans. He was a politician, head of "The People's League" after the war, and prime minister on several occasions.

Chapter Two

1. Letter to Maiorescu, 8 April 1889, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu in scrisori*, p. 140.

2. Letter to Maiorescu, 2/14 May 1897, *Ibid.*, pp. 178–79.

3. Letter to Maiorescu, 21 May 1891, *Ibid.*, p. 87.

4. For *"forme fără fond"* see Maiorescu's essay *În contra direcţiei de astăzi în cultura română* (1868), reprinted in T. Maiorescu, *Critice*, Bucharest, 1966, pp. 73–83.

5. Letter to Maiorescu, 9/21 June 1895, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu in scrisori*, p. 158.

6. Letter to Maiorescu, 21 May 1891, *Ibid.*, p. 87.

7. Letter to Iacob Negruzzi, 13/25 January 1894, *Cele mai frumoase scrisori*, p. 195.

8. Letter to Maiorescu, 2/14 January 1893, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 110.

9. Eugen Lovinescu, *Critice*, VI, Bucharest, 1928, p. 132.

10. Mispronunciation of the Romanian word for "maize porridge."

11. Agapia, a convent in the north of Moldavia, whence comes the miraculous icon of the Virgin, summoned to bring rain.

12. Saşa's arguments imply that the peasants owned land at the end of the 1860's, which is in accord with the historic facts. The first expropriation took place in 1864 under Prince Cuza. In 1887 there was a massive sale of state lands for the benefit of the peasants, accompanied by various financial concessions. The second great expropriation dates from 1922, as a consequence of the promise made by King Ferdinand to the peasant soldiers during the First World War.

13. Letter to Iacob Negruzzi, 13/25 January 1894, *Cele mai frumoase scrisori*, p. 195.

14. Preface to the first edition of *Viaţa la ţară* (1898), reprinted in *Opere*, II, Bucharest, 1970, p. 17.

15. Letter from Maiorescu, 8/20 September 1894, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 347.

16. Letter from Maiorescu, 20 May 1895, *Ibid.*, p. 350.

Chapter Three

1. Letter to Maiorescu, 6/18 October 1895, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 162.

2. Letter from Maiorescu, 6/18 November 1895, *Ibid.*, p. 352.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 353.

4. Letter to Maiorescu, 25 November 1895, *Ibid.*, p. 163.

5. Published in *Convorbiri literare*, August-October 1892.

6. Letter to N. Petraşcu, 4/16 May 1898, quoted by M. Gafiţa in *Opere*, II, 1970, p. 709.

7. Letter to N. Petraşcu, 3/15 June 1897, quoted by M. Gafiţa, *Ibid.*, p. 708.

8. Draft of letter to Maiorescu, November 1895, *Scrisori inedite* p. 172.

9. Letter to Maiorescu, 30 October/11 November 1897, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 195.

10. Cf. R. W. Seton-Watson, *History of the Roumanians*, London, 1963, p. 337. "On 30 August/ 8 September the Roumanian army had its real baptism of fire in the redoubts of Griviţa, before Plevna: and the foreign attaches and correspondents were unanimous in their praise of its extreme gallantry and steadiness, which contributed very materially to the final defeat of the Turks."

11. R. W. Seton-Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 336. "There was a tendency to override or ignore Romanian susceptibilities and treat the country as a mere Russian dependency—an attitude which doubtless finds its explanation in its repeated occupations and treaty provisions of the previous hundred years."

12. Letter to N. Petraşcu, 3/15 June 1897, *Cele mai frumoase scrisori*, p. 257.

13. The text of the despatch in French runs: "Les Turcs ayant amassé les plus grandes masses à Plevna nous abîment. Prie de faire fusion, démonstration et si possible passage du Danube que tu désires faire. Entre le Jiul et Corabia cette démonstration indispensable pour faciliter mes mouvements. Nicolas." The text is quoted by Maiorescu in *"Scurtă privire istorică asupra ultimilor treizeci de ani din istoria politică a României"* (Short Historical Survey of the Last Thirty Years of Roumania's Political History), published in *Convorbiri literare*, 10 October 1897. There have been several versions of this famous despatch, this one being the most often quoted.

14. G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent* (History of Romanian Literature from its Origins to the Present), Bucharest, 1941, p. 474.

15. Letter to Maiorescu, 11/23 October 1897, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 191.

16. Letter to Maiorescu, 13/25 November 1899, *Ibid.*, p. 227.

17. R. W. Seton-Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

18. Letter to Maiorescu, 23 September/5 October 1900, *Ibid.*, p. 246.

19. Cf. R. W. Seton-Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 407: "The Roumanian language was not tolerated officially. Public notices and even danger warnings, whether on a railway, in a post-office or on the streets, were exclusively Magyar. Expulsions were frequent, from schools or seminaries, of young men who dared to use their mother tongue, or to speak it 'ostentatiously' in the streets."

20. Letter to Maiorescu, 13/25 June 1898, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 246.
21. *Îndreptarea*, I, 150, 16 October 1918.
22. Letter to Maiorescu, 4 July 1906.

Chapter Four

1. Letter to Maiorescu, 2/14 May 1897, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 185.
2. Letter to Mrs. Maiorescu, 21 July/2 August 1899, *Ibid.*, p. 221.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
4. The maxims are mostly drawn from a personal diary entitled *Varia* which Zamfirescu kept while living in Rome. The diary contains ideas and observations about people and society in the form of notes and aphorisms. Their integration into the novel adds many autobiographical elements and illustrates the writer's moralistic side.
5. Letter to S. Mehedinţi, 20 March/2 April 1905, quoted by M. Gafiţa in *Opere*, IV, p. 555.

Chapter Five

1. Letter to Maiorescu, 22 February 1893, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 112.
2. Nicolae Manolescu, *Lecturi infidele* (Unfaithful Readings) Bucharest, 1966, pp. 27–45.
3. Letter to Maiorescu, 28 November/11 December 1904, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu in scrisori*, p. 286.
4. N. Manolescu, *Lecturi infidele*, p. 40.
5. D. Zamfirescu, "*Neinventivul Carol I şi cîţiva din sfetnicii săi*" in *Magazin Istoric*, an. VII, nr. 10, October 1973, pp. 23–29, 37–39.

Chapter Six

1. Al. Busuioceanu, *Figuri şi cărţi* (Figures and Books), Bucharest, n.d., p. 164.

Chapter Seven

1. Spune, Zante, unde-i timpul cînd Byron în liniştire Pe-ale mărei tale valuri dorul său şi-l legăna . . . .
2. Subt o boltă-ncondeiată cu lungi litere arabe
Unde aurul se leagă cu granitul african,
Unde stau, ieşiţi din ziduri, sfincşii dormitînd pe labe,
Ce port vase de-alabastru, stîlpi cu capiteluri albe,
E întinsă-o masă mare de porfir egipţian . . . .

3. Cum, Paolă, sărmano, vii tu din Miramare
Unde-ai cîntat în duo cu întristata mare
Suspinul unui val,
Vii astăzi să-ţi duci harpa prin orişice tavernă,
Îţi pleci frumoasa frunte pe orişicare pernă,
La orişicare bal? . . .
4. S-aud pîraiele cum curg
În pacea palidei lumine;
Se umple valea de amurg,
Iar eu mă duc gîndind la tine.

S-aude clopotul la schit:
Merg pustnicii să se închine;
Luceafărul a răsărit,
Iar eu mă duc gîndind la tine.

S-aude buciumul la munţi
Înfiorînd cu lungi suspine
Tăcerea codrilor cărunţi . . .
Eu mă tot duc gîndind la tine.
5. Letter to Elena Miller-Verghi, 2/14 September 1896.
6. Tristele umbre se lasă pe văi de sus de pe dealuri
Singure, palide, pline de-o lume vie de basme:
Bradul, umbrela si-o-ntinde pe muchea arsei coline;
Mierla şăgalnică ţipă prin grase tufe de lauri . . . .
7. Cicero, vechiule stîlp al acestor clasic locuri . . . .
8. Plin de un dor fără saţiu de lumea vremilor duse,
Timpul şi forma de astăzi mă lasă rece ca gheaţa . . . .
9. Soarele moare prelung în adîncul mărilor tusce.
10. Ah! ajută-mă acuma, tu, Minerva înţeleaptă,
Să găsesc printre atîtea lucruri nouă ce mă mint,
Drumul către Salamina şi navarcul ce aşteaptă
Să mă ntoarcă la Megara, Eleusis şi Corint.

Lasă-mă să viu la tine, lume plină de parfumuri,
Ce răsai din timpul clasic ce mi-a fost atît de drag;
Să culeg în libertate trandafirii de pe drumuri,
Să mă mbăt din armonia limbei din Areopag . . . .
11. Letter from Maiorescu, 13 June 1893, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 336.
12. Uşor se mişcă tînara fecioară,
Purtîndu-şi trupul drept ca o făclie;
Cu amforele vine de la vie
Şi vinde must, ca-n vremi de-odinioară.

Copila albă, vina ta să fie
De te-o-ntîlni Polibus, bunăoară:
Cum mînile-ţi sunt prinse de ulcioară
O să-ţi sărute benghiul din bărbie.

Dar ea zîmbeşte. Colţurile gurei
S-ascund hoţiş în gingaşe gropiţe,
Iar ochii vineţi iau culoarea murei.

Şi iată-l el, încununat de viţe,
Că-i sare-n drum. Pe pajiştea pădurei
În urma lor, culcate-s romaniţe.

13. Tăcute lacrămi picură din plante
Ş-alunecă pe jghiabul de porfiră;
Sub şipot stă Orfeu cîntînd din liră
Pe-un glob purtat de gîrbovul Atlante.

14. Letter to Elena Miller-Verghi, 4 January 1895, *Scrisori inedite*, p. 205.

15. Cu firea ei cea arzătoare
Sosit-a vara înapoi;
Toţi pomii sunt în sărbătoare,
În tei stă floare lîngă floare . . .
E dulce vara pe la noi!

Cînd dimineaţa se inveşte
Din al văzduhurilor fund,
Tot cîmpul parcă-ntinereşte,
Iar, deşteptată de pe prund,
Cireada satului porneşte . . .

În urma ei un roi de grauri
Ca nişte valuri cenuşii
S-amestecă prin bălării,
S-aşează-n coarne pe la tauri,
Fac fel de fel de nebunii.

Pîna ce-n zarea depărtată
Spre lacul trist se pun pe drum
Şi cum se duc, - acum ş-acum
Se mai zăresc încă odată
Ca rămăşiţa unui fum.

16. Şi merse azi, şi merse mîni,
Şi merse vreme îndelungă . . . .

17. Deasupra limpedelui lac
Cădeau din bolta de lumină
Pletoase ramuri de copac
Şi vrejuri lungi de gelsomină . . . .

18. Zamfirescu thus unsympathetically summarizes Goga's poem *Noi* (We).

19. Covoare şi straie şi flori de Bizanţ
În curgerea vremii se duc ca un fum,
Iar oastea se ţine în urma lor lanţ . . . .

20. Întoarnă-te iarăşi în formă de flori
În farmecul gemelor stinse
Şi lasă pamîntul sub pete de nori
Sub umbre de aripi întinse.

21. Ion Negoiţescu, "*Duiliu Zamfirescu poet*," in *Scriitori moderni*, Bucharest, 1966, p. 121.

22. Tudor Arghezi, "Duiliu Zamfirescu," in *Cugetul românesc* I, 5 (June 1922), p. 443.

23. G. Ibrăileanu, *Scriitori români şi străini*, Bucharest, 1926, pp. 163–66.

24. M. Dragomirescu, *Integralismul*, Bucharest, 1929, p. 49.

25. N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii româneşti contemporane*, Bucharest, 1934, Vol. I, pp. 327–38, and Vol. II, pp. 168–70.

26. Eşti scrisă numa-n graţii şi păreri
În ritm cu elegante mlădieri. . . .

27. Ion Pillat, *Tradiţie şi literatură*, Bucharest, 1943, p. 252.

28. I. Negoiţescu, *Scriitori moderni*, Bucharest, 1966, p. 121.

Chapter Eight

1. Letter to Maiorescu, 7/19 March 1893, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 333.

2. G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent*, Bucharest, 1941, p. 471.

3. Constantin Stere (1865–1936), Bessarabian publicist and writer, was the moving spirit of the Poporanist movement which Zamfirescu attacked with his pen. Stere wrote a *roman-fleuve* entitled *În preajma revoluţiei* (On the Verge of Revolution), banned today in Romania, in which he narrates episodes from Russia in the time of the Bolshevik revolution.

4. Letter to Duiliu Ioanin, 27 October 1880, *Scrisori inedite*, p. 120.

5. Letter to Duiliu Ioanin, 3 March 1881, *Scrisori Inedite*, p. 140.

6. E. Lovinescu, *Memorii*, III, Bucharest, 1931–1937, p. 26.

7. S. Cioculescu, "*O faţă nouă a lui Duiliu Zamfirescu*," in *Revista Fundaţiilor Regale*, Vol. III, 1936, pp. 417–33.

8. M. Sebastian, *Eseuri—Cronici—Memorial*, Bucharest, 1972, pp. 453–57.

9. Letter to Maiorescu, 30 October/11 November 1898, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 210.
10. Letter to Maiorescu, 30 October/11 November 1897, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 196.
11. Letter to Maiorescu, 10 December 1901, *Ibid.*, p. 225.
12. Letter to Maiorescu, 27 February 1893, *Ibid.*, p. 113–14.
13. Letter to Maiorescu, 23 November 1895, *Ibid.*, p. 163.
14. Letter to S. Mehedinţi, 20 March/2 April 1905, quoted by M. Gafiţa in *Opere*, IV, Bucharest, 1974, p. 555.
15. Letter to Maiorescu, 6 October 1895, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 75.
16. Letter from Maiorescu, 4/16 October 1890, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 320.
17. Letter to Maiorescu, 21 May 1891, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, pp. 136–37.
18. Letter to Maiorescu, 29 April/12 May 1902, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 261.
19. E. Lovinescu, *Critice*, VI, Bucharest, 1928, pp. 128–43.
20. Letter to Maiorescu, 9/21 June 1895, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 159.
21. Letter to Maiorescu, 24 October 1889, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 57.
22. Letter to Maiorescu, 1 April 1890, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 64.
23. Letter to Maiorescu, 3/15 July 1891, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 90.
24. Letter to Maiorescu, 6 December 1891, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 96.
25. Letter to Elena Miller-Verghi, 21 November 1890, *Scrisori inedite*, p. 192.
26. Letter to Maiorescu, 20 January 1889, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 31.

Chapter Nine

1. Letter to Maiorescu, 28 September/11 October 1904, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 286.
2. *Opere*, III, pp. 125–27.
3. Letter to Maiorescu, 13/25 June 1898, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 204.
4. Letter to Maiorescu, 29 April/12 May 1902, *Duiliu Zamfirescu şi Titu Maiorescu în scrisori*, p. 303.
5. Letter to Maiorescu, November 1895, *Scrisori inedite*, p. 175.
6. *Opere*, II, p. 275.
7. *Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile secţiunii literare*. Tom. XXXVIII, seria I, 1911, pp. 1–34.
8. E. Lovinescu, *Memorii*, III, Bucharest, n.d., pp. 21–23.

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5. *Anna*, 1938.
6. *Îndreptări*, 1938.
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2. Correspondence

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